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A SYLLABUS OF POETICS

FOUNDED ON

WORDSWORTH, COLERIDGE, SHELLEY AND ARISTOTLE

A BASIS FOR LECTURES

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FOREWORD

The first five parts of this book are outlines of lectures delivered here during the last four sessions. They are based on Wordsworth's *Preface*, Coleridge's *Biographia Litararia* (relevant Chapters) and Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*. These were recommended for Post-Graduate study by the late Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, then Vice-Chancellor and President of the Post-Graduate Department. Of English writings on poetry, these three short tractates by three of the greatest poets are certainly the clearest, most succinct, most to the point, and most suggestive. Aristotle's *Poetics* was added as the most condensed and authoritative description of the classical type of poetry. Parts VI, VII and VIII are adopted from articles published in the *Calcutta Review*. The one on Romanticism was meant as an aid to the study of Wordsworth; those on the Music of Poetry and Criticism of Poetry, as helps to the study of Coleridge. The addition of these parts has led to some repetition of topics, as in dealing with *Aristotle*. The general account of poetry here given is in agreement, in the main, with that of the above three thinkers, and therefore, with what is now commonly known as the romantic type.

A SYLLABUS OF POETICS

FOUNDED ON THE WORKS OF WORDSWORTH, COLERIDGE, SHELLEY AND ARISTOTLE— AS A BASIS FOR LECTURES.

INTRODUCTORY

Poetry and its Periods.

Poetry is a revelation and expression of those truths which affect most directly the well-being and destiny of humanity and thereby touch most strongly the human feelings, — expressing these truths not in abstract formulae in which they can be understood only by an effort of reasoning, but in concrete imagery in which they can be seen by the mind's eye intuitively.

Science and Poetry agree in being revelations of truth. Science regards truth (or the world) as existing by itself out of connection with humanity, and as indifferent to human interests and feelings. Poetry regards the world as the source and sphere of human life and feeling, and sees and reveals those aspects of the world which most directly affect humanity. Science reduces the world of concrete things, as far as

it can, to a world of abstract laws, and expresses these in abstract language which appeals only to the reason; poetry, proceeding in an opposite direction, expresses abstract truth in concrete images in which it can be *seen* by all, without inference or effort of reasoning. Science speaks in abstractions; poetry speaks in pictures. Science is interested in truth for its own sake, and is indifferent to human feeling; poetry indeed rises out of truth—"It is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge"—but it is out of the truth which affects humanity and therefore passes over into feeling; and its own peculiar sphere is in the feelings of men and the reflections rising out of them.

Many attempts have been made to define poetry but none of them has been found satisfactory. It includes so many fluctuating phases of feeling and thought that it seems impossible to include it all within the limits of one formula. The definition given by Leigh Hunt (following Wordsworth) may be quoted as among the best; "poetry is the utterance of a passion for truth, beauty and power, embodying and illustrating its conception by imagination and fancy, and modulating its language on the principle of variety in uniformity." But this definition contains too many things that require to be themselves defined. The following may be quoted as the latest of all: "Absolute poetry is the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language."

But a definition like this does more to darken than to illuminate the subject. In the following pages an attempt is made to draw from the great poets themselves (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley) some understanding and appreciation of poetry as the poets themselves understood it.

Periods.—But the truths which the poet sees and out of which poetic thought and feeling rise, are found in different spheres of nature and life; and there are many different ways of presenting them so as to make others see and feel them. Therefore there are many different kinds or forms of poetry. Thus in English history, we can distinguish, in a general way, seven different 'periods,' in which different circumstances of the English people have given rise to different kinds of poetry—by producing different kinds of thought, rising into different kinds of feeling, and different ways of expression.

(1) The *Anglo-Saxon Period*, in which the primitive ideas and impulses of the Teutonic race (exhibited in Beowulf) are seen becoming transformed and supplemented by the new ideas and feelings introduced by the Christian religion.

But, though it contains some battle pieces of great vigour as *Maldon* and *Brunnanbarh* and the fine paraphrase of scripture ascribed to Caedmon, its interest of the period on the whole is more historical and philological than literary.

(2) The *Period of Romance*, viz., of the romances of chivalry, in which the military spirit produced by the conflict of races in barbaric times is seen becoming transformed by the spirit of the new religion. The result is that the old fighting spirit is changed into that spirit of self-sacrifice and voluntary service on the part of the strong in behalf of the weak, which is called chivalry; and the spiritualism of Christianity is seen mixing with the still living spiritualism of pagan times, producing a world of wonder and mystery of angels and demons, fairies and goblins, wizards, monsters and "enchantments drear" which is a fitting field for heroic adventure and chivalrous service, as seen in the histories of *Arthur* and *Charles the Great* called romances because written in the romance languages.

(3) The *period* of which *Chaucer* became the central power,—when many seem to have become weary of romance, as filling people's minds with unreal things and turning their thoughts away from the world of reality; and which dealt (or pretended to deal) largely with the affairs of real life (as in most of the *Canterbury Tales*)—sometimes burlesqueing romance (as in the *Rime of Sir Topas* of Chaucer, and afterwards in the *Don Quixote* of the Spaniard Cervantes).

(4) The *Elizabethan Period* which includes within it a revival of romance (in Spenser and

in many plays of Shakespeare and Fletcher), but, in its great outburst of dramatic literature, sought to see and reveal the deepest truths of life and human nature, with a power of thought and command of language never surpassed; but at last, in its lyric poetry especially, declined from sincere thought and feeling into artificial metaphor, conceits and affectation, (*e.g.* in Lyly, Donne and Cowley).

(5) The "*Classical*" *Period* (1660-1800) or period of Latin and French influence, turned away from the extravagance and artificial obscurity of the later Elizabethans; and began to imitate the simplicity of thought and language of the new French School of literature (created by the new French Academy), and the dignity and simplicity of structure characteristic of the ancient Latin and Greek poets (called "classical").

But in this way it become largely imitative, and inferior in originality to the preceding periods. To avoid the fancifulness of romance, it dealt mainly with real life and character; and, to imitate the dignity of classical poetry, it confined itself to subjects from the upper classes and town society. In dealing with these, it imitated the French and Latin poets by taking mainly their favourite form of satire, and their epigrammatic style (as seen in Pope). But its straining after classical dignity of style

produced a tendency to avoid, as far as possible, the words used in common life and in prose, and to substitute uncommon words and vague circumlocutions, which seemed to them more consistent with the dignity of poetry. To state particular facts about particular things, seemed to be prosaic ; hence generalities were preferred to particulars. These things and events are often described in terms so general that one description is too like another, and the same thing seems to be repeated in different words. This tendency towards an artificial "poetic diction" was carried so far that, towards the end of the century, people came to think that poetry consisted, not in thought and feeling, but in the use of certain words and phrases. It was thought prosaic to call things by their right names—rather by some word from former poets, or some periphrastic description.

And further, the mechanical discoveries of Descartes and Newton had produced a general feeling that nature, and perhaps life itself, was only machinery ; and that there was nothing in the world which could not be subjected to mathematical calculation and therefore nothing spiritual, and no wonder or mystery anywhere. This tendency towards mechanisation and commonplace strengthened the reaction against romance, and led to the superficial and prosaic view of nature and life characteristic

of the period—making it to be the age of prose, "common sense" and utility. Hence, to some, poetry seemed to be dying out. This fear was well expressed by Blake in his appeal *To the Muses* in which he complains of their having deserted England—

> How have you left the ancient love
> The bards of old enjoyed in you ;
> The languid strings do scarcely move,
> The sound is forced, the notes are few.

(6) The *New Romanticism* of the 19th century (1798—1832) was a reaction against the mechanical way of thinking regarding the world, and against the artificial poetic diction of the preceding period, and a return to a spiritualistic interpretation of nature and a more natural language. People were beginning to feel that the world is not wholly machinery ; that there must be more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in 18th century philosophy and poetry ; that poetry had become superficial and lacking in inspiration, seeing only the outside of things, and failing to see that things are full of meanings and suggestions pointing to powers beyond outward appearances ; and that the world is really full of wonders and mysteries which cannot be subjected to mathematical calculation ; and that human thought cannot rest at peace without

thinking of the realities lying beyond appearances, and their relations to human life and destiny. Considered in this way, the world "widened to man's view," and an inexhaustible sphere of wonder and mystery, of thought and feeling, opened up, not dreamt of before.

And in consequence of this new way of thinking, there came a new kind of poetry, and a new theory of poetry. This spiritual life which pervades "all thinking things, all objects of all thought," will manifest itself in the mind of the poet also, and poetical creation will itself be prompted and inspired by the creative life which is in nature. Poetical thought will come spontaneously as if by inspiration. A true poem will not be *made* as a watch is made, by art following rule and model; it will *grow* in the mind of the poet as the flower grows in the soil.

And to this inspiring life of nature all classes of people are the same—the lives of common people are as full of meaning and suggest as much thought and feeling as those of the upper classes; and the true language of poetry is not an artificial language to be called "poetic diction," but the natural language in which thought and feeling clothe themselves spontaneously.

This return to a more spiritual view of nature manifested itself in two ways—

(*a*) In *a return to the spiritualism of popular belief*—a re-introduction into literature, of

spiritualistic ideas first in the form in which they appear in the older romantic period—the popular belief, never altogether wanting, in the presence in nature of powers which are *super*-natural, *viz.*, spirits, demons, fairies and the like. (Such a revival from the past had been previously suggested by the printing of the *Ossianic Poems* and the *Traditional Ballads*, which had been preserved orally from times long past. And these fancies of popular belief had been reproduced in their oldest forms in ghost stories such as the *Castle of Otranto*, *The Old English Baron*, and *The Monk*, and with more refinement and moderation in the *quasi*-supernatural tales of Mrs. Radcliffe). These beliefs of the common people were utilised with more sincerity and greater literary power by Scott in his ballads, and used to give symbolical expression to deep truths of life by Coleridge in his *Mariner* and *Christabel*, and presented in their ancient Greek form, by Keats in *Endymion*, *Lamia* and *Hyperion*.

(*b*) But such a revival could no longer be accepted with sincerity except as materials for metaphor, symbol and allegory; and was now superseded by spiritualism of a more philosophical kind, which, among English thinkers, seems to have presented itself first to Wordsworth. This was the belief that *the supernatural is in the natural*, or the "natural supernatural" (Carlyle). To make nature interesting we need not think

of a realm of ghosts, demons and fairies, nymphs and satyrs, dwelling in trees, springs and hills; nature everywhere reveals the presence of a universal and all-pervading spiritual power working in the processes of nature themselves—a central power of which nature itself is the outward manifestation—"a motion and a spirit which informs all thinking things, all objects of all thought, and rolls through all things." This is the "transcendental spiritualism" of Wordsworth which became the poetical philosophy of the 19th century.

These characteristics constitute what has been called *Romanticism*, as being a revival of the fundamental characteristics of the romance literature of the middle ages, *i.e.*, literature of the romance (Ramanic) languages, or dialects generally midway between the ancient Roman (Latin) and modern French, Italian, Spanish, etc., derived from it.

(7) The *Victorian period* continued the romanticism of the former period as in Tennyson and Arnold, and, though in a more artificial way and with less sincerity, in Rossetti, Swinburne and Morris (where we often find, however, the materials rather than the true spirit of romanticism); but returns frequently to realism as in Browning. Its most characteristic feature on the whole is the reconciliation of art with inspiration, classicism with romanticism. This is exhibited especially

in the cultivation of picturesqueness and vividness of imagery and description and harmony of sound, as in Tennyson and Swinburne (following Keats and Shelley, but with more deliberate art). The great romantic poets had used description, metaphors and harmony of words mainly as a means of expressing thought and feeling; they now come to be sought too frequently for their own sake. Thus Swinburne and even Tennyson (in his early poems) have been accused of caring more for sound and colour than for thought.

Origin of the new Romantic movement: influence of Wordsworth.

This new movement of the 19th century was essentially a reaction against the classical period (1660—1798) and more especially against later part of the period. The literature of that period had been largely second-hand: in many cases it had treated over again subjects which had already been dealt with in Latin and French literature. It followed rules and models drawn from these literatures. And in straining after their dignity of style, it adopted a manner of expression in which things were not called by their common names, but usually by pompous circumlocutions.

Wordsworth was the first to protest on principle against this style, and to urge a different view of poetry and poetic language.

His views on the nature and function of poetry are given most succinctly in the *Preface* of 1800 (to the re-printed *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 with additional poems). The *Ballads* had been so new in language, style and thought, and so different from the fashionable poetry of the time, that the literary authorities had been shocked, and had condemned the book as a worthless innovation written in defiance of taste and good sense and all the established rules and models of poetical composition. The half-playful poems on humble life were pronounced trivial and childish; the more elevated ones (*e.g.*, *Tintern Abbey*) were declared to be nonsense. Wordsworth in the first part of the *Preface* states his purpose in writing the *Ballads*, and justifies his choice of subjects and language; and then, to justify himself further, passes on to a discourse on the nature of poetry in general, and to show, from the nature of poetry, what the language of poetry should be.

Many critics, from Coleridge onwards, have represented him as teaching that the subjects and style of his *Ballads* of humble life, ought to be the subjects and style of all poetry—both of his own and that of others. Then, when they find that Wordsworth, like other poets, varies his style in keeping with his subject, they accuse Wordsworth of departing from his principles, and, by his practice, contradicting his own teaching. But Wordsworth never really departed from his teaching which was, that poetry is a revelation

of truth; that it consists in thought (truth) and feeling, and not in artificial "poetic diction"; and that thought and feeling are best expressed when expressed in the simplest possible language, which is never very different from the speech of common life; and that gaudy language and figures of speech are but too often disguises to conceal poverty of thought and unreality of feeling.

His protest against the characteristics of the classical period.

The *Preface* was a manifesto of reaction against the style of literature, especially of poetry, which had grown up during the so-called "classical" period (1660—1798), and had reached its extreme form in the later part of the century.

(1) That period itself had begun in a reaction against the extravagance of thought and obscurity of style, into which poetry had fallen in the first half of the 17th century (Euphuism, Marinism, Gongorism) as in the so-called 'metaphysical' school, and, somewhat later, against the noble but heavy and over-learned prose of Taylor, Milton, Browne, etc., and this reaction had led at first to imitation of the simpler and more natural style introduced into French poetry and prose by the new Academy. The new French school had further checked the extravagance of its own older literature in poetry and drama, by introducing the rules drawn out

by ancient classical critics (Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, etc.), and observed generally by the classical poets. And the revival of classical influence had led further to extensive imitation of the forms, style, and subjects of classical authors. The rules of Aristotle had been adopted in France especially to regulate dramatic structure (and continued in force there, down to the triumph of the romantic movement about 1830); and attempts had been made to introduce the same into English drama (as by Dryden in his so-called "heroic" dramas). The Latin satirists with their condensed epigrammatic style became frequent objects of imitation, and the choral odes of Pindar and other Greek poets were imitated by Cowley, Dryden, Gray, Collins, etc., pastorals by Pope, etc. English imitators often surpassed their French and Latin originals—as, *e.g.*, Pope in satire surpassed his originals Boileau and Horace. But the general prevalence of imitation led at last to a want of freshness and originality, and monotonous repetition. This went so far in poetry towards the end of the century that many began to think of poetry as an exhausted subject, doomed soon to disappear—Burns, Blake and Cowper (in some of his poems) being the only relief to the general monotony and mediocrity.

(2) Thus, in this period, poetry came to be considered as largely *a product of art*—consisting

largely in imitation of models, adherance to rules and reproduction of the ideas and phraseology of earlier times. This influence of classical authority led to the theory of poetical composition and criticism which prevailed through the century. Poetical excellence seemed to consist (largely at least) in imitating certain models and conforming to certain rules. The models, to be sure, were the masterpieces of ancient Latin and sometimes Greek literature (the "classics" or standards), and the rules to be followed were those laid down by ancient scholars, especially Aristotle. But it was assumed that, by these and their successors, all the laws and conditions of good poetry had been found out and settled for ever ; and no one who violated them was to be regarded as a genuine poet. A revolutionary in literature (like Wordsworth) was to be ostracised from the company of poets. At one time even Shakespeare's plays could not be tolerated in their original form but had to be re-written.

The application of these principles made the composition of poetry to be largely artificial. It seemed as if the use of certain words and phrases, the copying of certain models, the application of certain rules, was what mainly distinguished poetry from prose. Thus poems could be *made* ; the poet could learn or be trained to be a poet, by careful study of models

and laborious application of rules. Shelley protests against this; a poet is born not made; a poem is not made but grows. This was the teaching of the new romantic school.

(3) Hence this period developed a peculiar kind of *poetic diction* which appears in several forms.

In the later part of it especially, general propositions came to be considered more poetical than particular ones; and it was thought more poetical to call things by uncommon words and round about phrases than by their common names; and thus a peculiar system of *poetic diction* was evolved and thought to be the proper language of poetry.

This tendency to poetic diction is seen (a) in its preferance for *generalities*. This tendency to imitation and repetition extended itself from subjects, structure and thought, to language—*i.e.*, to the use of words and phrases. Such ideas regarding the dignity of poetry led to the belief that common things and common words are beneath the dignity of poetry.

Thus in stead of describing particular things and stating simple facts, they thought it more dignified to speak of classes of things, and use general propositions. This led to generality and vagueness, and thereby to monotony—one description was too like another—one sentence was an echo of another. This is seen also in prose writers of the period—not only in Johnson but

to a less extent in historians such as Gibbon and Robertson. Thus painters have been accused of painting a tree, a rose, a fish, in such a way that one could indeed know it to be tree, rose or fish, but could know what particular kind of tree, rose or fish it was. They represented only what was common to the whole class, omitting what distinguished individuals (the charge which Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelite painters made against Raphael and the artists who followed him.) In the later half of the century both poets and prose writers adopted largely this generalising style, so that one description or narrative often reads like a repetition of another.

The same straining after classical dignity of style led also to the frequent use of parallel and balanced clauses; and this led to further monotony, because the author was often tempted, for the sake of balance, to repeat nearly the same thing in different words. This is noticeable especially in Johnson. The parody given in *Rejected Addresses* is strongly burlesque, but it brings out clearly a real characteristic of Johnson and his imitators.

(*b*) And in its tendency to call common things by uncommon words or round-about phrases. The same tendency made them seek to avoid common words and phrases as vulgar, and substitute uncommon ones as more dignified. And when single words sufficiently dignified could not be found, they expressed the same thing by circumlocutions, thinking these more poetical. Thus to call a man by the

common word "man" was thought prosaic in poetry he should rather be called a "swain" or a "hero." A woman was generally called a "nymph" or the "fair one." The sea was always called "the main." To call a gun, a gun; a spade, a spade; or a boot, a boot, was prose, but if we speak of "the deadly tube," a "horticultural utensil," "the shining leather which encased the limb" (Cowper), we rise, they thought, into poetry.

There are cases, no doubt, in which such periphrases may be justified, as when they give a more vivid picture of the thing than the simple word would do. Thus Milton writes "optic tube" for telescope, "sonorous mental belowing martial sounds" for trumpet, and even Wordsworth himself speaks of "the feathered denizens of the mere," when he means waterfowl merely; but when repeated too often, they become wearisome, and are usually merely artifices to make prose appear to be poetry.

(*c*) Another artifice for the same purpose was the frequent use of *personifications* of abstract qualities. To speak of anger, fear, hate, love and the like, as just what they are, is prose merely; but if we write the words with capital initials, and speak of them as saying and doing things like persons, then we are writing poetry. This figure may sometimes, to be sure, serve a purpose by bringing out a shade of meaning

which cannot be brought out otherwise, and is then justifiable (as sometimes by Wordsworth himself, *e.g.*, in "The Yew Trees"). It was very common in the 18th century, and often used even by good poets as Gray and Collins; but is often no better than an artifice to make prose seem to be poetry. The following lines (quoted by Coleridge) illustrate the misuse of the figure: A poet means to say, regarding an absent friend, "I will remember thee;" but this is simple prose, and he turns it, he thinks, into poetry by writing:

"Thy image on her wing
Before my Fancy's eye shall Memory bring."

Here both fancy and memory are made to be living beings. Memory is a winged creature of some kind, and takes on her back the bust or picture of the friend, flies through the air, and sets it down before Fancy; and Fancy looks at it. To be sure, not all cases of personification were so bad as this; but many, when analysed, involved some absurdity. Even the following familiar line of Gray is open to doubt. He means to say that a certain person, under more favourable circumstances, might have become a great poet; but what he does say, is that, under more favourable circumstances, he might have "waked to ecstasy the living Lyre." Here the lyre is supposed to be a living creature, and

to be asleep, and very difficult to awaken, but this person could have awakened it and put it into a state of ecstatic delight. But what is the use of such a figure?

(4) Another consequence drawn from the classical conception of the dignity of poetry, was the belief that only great events and great persons, or at least high society and city life, could supply events and persons worthy or capable of poetical treatment. The lives of common people, "humble and rustic life," were regarded as "low and mean," and to be avoided as barren and meaningless. This prejudice also drew a strong protest from Wordsworth.

(5) But what perhaps most of all excited Wordsworth's dissatisfaction with the literature of the century, was the to him superficial view which it seemed to take, of the world of nature and life. The poets of that period thought and wrote about nature as if it were nothing more than lifeless machinery. Thomson and his followers could describe the outward appearances of earth and air, but their descriptions were little more than catalogues of appearances, as if the things had no meanings to their minds and suggested no thoughts of anything beyond themselves—

"A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to them.
And it was nothing more."

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But these things filled Wordsworth's mind with an overpowering consciousness of the mysterious agencies at work in them, and wonder and speculation as to their meaning and purpose, and their relation to the purpose and destiny of man. The feeling that the world is full of life made him feel at home in the world; the mechanical theory of a lifeless nature oppressed him with a feeling of solitude, and made him think he would be happier if he could go back to the child-like superstitions of the ancient Greeks (like Keats), and fancy a spiritual being in every grove—

"Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan, suckled in a creed outworn,
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less
forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

The result of these influences taken together was that, as the period advanced, poetry became limited more and more in style, range, variety and originality; and some began to think even that poetry was going out of date and must die out altogether soon (see arguments of Peacock, Hazlitt and Macaulay, and Shelley's reply in "Defence of Poetry"). The period produced however two original poets, *viz.*, Burns and

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Blake, to whom Wordsworth's criticisms do not apply. The latter expressed his sense of the decay of poetry in his poem "To the Muses" (1785) quoted above. But we have to enter with more detail into Wordsworth's conception of poetry as expressed cursorily in his *Prefaces*, and indicated in his poems themselves.

PART I.

WORDSWORTH'S THEORY OF POETRY

Wordsworth's-friends advised him to meet his critics by writing a book. He did not do this, but thought it enough to write a *Preface.* In this preface he gives expression to more ideas of a suggestive kind, about poetry than perhaps any other poet has done (though Sidney, Coleridge and Shelley have to be considered in this connection—not to speak of Horace, Boilean and Pope.)

Origin of the Preface.

Wordsworth and Coleridge, though both had written their earliest poems somewhat in the style of the period, soon began to understand its defects, and to see the need of a new beginning. They ascribed the decay of poetry to the prevailing theories regarding the nature of poetry and poetic diction, and in 1797 joined in producing a small volume of poems on a new class of subjects and in a new style of thought and diction, and called it *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). The little book was so new in style that it was

generally denounced as violating all the established rules and precedents of poetry. Wordsworth supplied a new preface in 1800, in which he explained and defended his poetical principles. The book was the beginning of a new school of poetry, though certain questions raised in it are debated still by some.

Purpose of the Preface.

§ 1. The *Lyrical Ballads* was written as an experiment to try whether poems written on a new class of subjects, in a new style of composition, and in a new vein of thought, would be acceptable to the public of that time—most of the poems being on events of common life and expressed in such language as was "really used by men," and therefore widely different from the fashionable poetry of the period.

§ 2. The poems were understood and appreciated by a few as making a new beginning and opening up a new world to poetry; but were neglected by the general public, and denounced by professional critics as contravening all the established rules of poetry, and almost beneath contempt.

§ 3. Some friends advised him to write "a systematic defence of the theory on which his poems were written"; but he felt, that he could not do that without entering philosophically

into the theory of poetry, and into a critical examination of the poetry popular at the time and of the state of public taste. But this would have required a more extensive and laborious work than he was able to undertake. Yet he feels that he should not "obtrude on the public, poems so materially different from those on which general approbation is at present bestowed, without some explanation and defence," and for this purpose he thinks it sufficient to write a short preface.

§ 4. He admits that when an author offers a new volume of poems to the public, the public naturally expect to find in it such subjects, ideas, and forms of expression as they have been accustomed to find in other poets of their time; and that his own work will cause disappointment in this respect. "Those who have been accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers," and have been taught to think that poetry consists just in the use of language of that kind, may think that they have been induced to buy as poetry a book that is not poetry at all.

Defence of the Lyrical Ballads.

§ 5. Now his *Lyrical Ballads* differ from other poems of the time mainly in the following points:—He had (A) "chosen incidents and

situations from common life," or "humble and rustic life," (B) and had endeavoured "to relate or describe them throughout in a selection of language really used by men," and (C) had tried to make them materials for poetry by "throwing over them a certain colouring of imagination." What does he mean by these innovations, and how does he justify them?

A. *Is "humble life" a fit subject for poetry?*

1. He had deliberately chosen incidents and situations from "humble life" as the subjects of most of his poems contained in that collection. The common people from whom he had taken most of his subjects were the people living in the district in which he himself had spent most of his life, *viz.*, the lake district of Cumberland (whence the "Lake School"). But the choise of such subjects had exposed him to much ridicule on the part of his critics. Hence the need of explanation. Was he right in taking up such subjects? Was Coleridge's criticism justifiable?

Now the reason why he had chosen subjects so often from "humble and rustic life," was because "in that condition the essential passions of the human heart (which supply the subjects of poetry), find a better soil in which they can attain maturity." How does he prove this?

A distinction is here implied (and everywhere in Wordsworth) between the *natural* life of human beings, and an *artificial* life. "Humble and rustic" people continue to live, in the main, the *natural* life, or life which nature intended and fitted them for. The tendency of thought, feeling and conduct which nature planted in their constitution at birth, is in them left unchanged, and continues to predominate through their lives; and their habits, customs and manners are such as rise naturally out of these impules planted in them by nature. In this form of life, mankind remains nearer to the source from which it draws its origin, *viz.*, nature; and still retains most of what was bestowed on it by nature; and is therefore nearer to the ultimate source of both nature and man, *viz.*, Deity (see the great poem on *Childhood*; "Heaven lies about us in our infancy"). It is in life of this kind, therefore, that men generally attain their healthiest development morally as well as physically, and their happiest condition socially (Rousseau), whatever the common opinion may be.

But poets had considered the life of such "humble and rustic people" as altogether beneath the notice of poetry (except perhaps for burlesque situations). Wordsworth considers it a legitimate sphere for poetry, or even as the best sphere, and one from which the deepest poetical thought and feeling might be drawn.

The life of cities and fashionable life, on the contrary, is largely an *artificial* life. There the impulses and instincts implanted by nature and those rising naturally out of them, have become more or less stifled by an overgrowth of habits, manners and customs, which rise, not directly out of nature, but out of the artificial circumstances in which men have placed themselves in the development of society and city life. And out of the new circumstances which men have created for themselves arise competition between strong and weak, inequalities of wealth, and rank, poverty, misery and crime, and all the vices of city life. These evils have been made mainly by men themselves, when they departed from the natural impulses and instincts which nature gave them, and created an artificial social system of their own. Men have made themselves to be what they are. See the poem, "Lines Written in Early Spring"—where he finds nature to be full of joyous feeling—"every flower enjoys the air it breathes,"—and contrasts the joyousness of nature made by God "with what man has made of man."

From this it follows that Wordsworth believed, with Plato and Rousseau, in "the descent of man" (in the literal sense of the word) from a higher to a lower state,—from nearness to nature and Deity to remoteness. He found this decline from a higher to a lower

state both in the life of the race, *viz.*, from the state in which nature placed it to that which man has made for himself; and also, as we find elsewhere, in that of the individual, from the state of nearness to heaven in which he still is in childhood ("Heaven lies about us in our infancy") to the remoteness of the man: "for yet I know where'er I go, that there hath passed away a glory from the earth."

> If this belief from heaven be sent,
> If such be nature's holy plan,
> Have I not reason to lament
> What man has made of man?

(opposed, of course, to the modern scientific doctrine, which assumes rather an "ascent of man" from animality to reason).

It should be noticed that, though Wordsworth is here merely explaining why some of the poems in the *Lyrical Ballads* deal with "humble and rustic life;" Coleridge and many other critics have assumed that he is here teaching that all poetry should deal with "humble (Coleridge even makes him say *low*) and rustic life," which is certainly very far from the truth. All that he says is, that humble and rustic life is a legitimate source of poetic thought and feeling. But he himself gives examples in the book, of poems of an altogether different order, and as lofty in thought and style as any in the language.

B. *But is "the language really used by men" a fit language for poetry? Controversy about the language of poetry.*

Further, he has written his *Lyrical Ballads*, as far as possible, "in a selection of language really used by men"—that is to say, he avoids the artificial "poetic diction" of his time. What is his meaning here? Was Coleridge's criticism of his use of common language justifiable? What is "poetic diction"?

A belief had become general during that century, that poetry, to be poetry, must be written in style and language different from those of prose and common intercourse. A poet must not express common things in common ways; prose does that; poetry must have a diction of its own. The ordinary names of things are prosaic because ordinary; the poet must find less common words for things, or he must indicate the things in descriptive periphrases. Particular facts when taken just as they are, are prosaic; high-sounding generalisations are more poetical. Personifications and parallel statements, and phrases repeated from the ancient classics (as allusions to the Muses, to Parnassus, Helicon, Pegasus and the like) were thought necessary to the making of poetry.

Thus a peculiar style of expression became prevalent—consisting of peculiar words and phrases, circumlocutions and generalisations,

personifications and classical allusions—and was considered the proper diction of poetry, if not poetry itself. In its extreme forms it was admired and praised as "splendour of diction:" Wordsworth calls it "gaudy and inane phraseology;" and "takes as great pains to avoid it in his poems as others to attain it."

This round-about method of expression in which the real facts and truths, where there were any, were concealed under clouds of vague verbiage, is well seen in the early poems of Pope, such as his *Pastorals* and *Messiah* and *Windsor Forest* (though his later works are distinguished for their terse and pointed style). Johnson seems to have reduced "splendour of diction" to an art in both prose and verse; and towards the end of the century, poetry came to consist largely of "poetical" phraseology (as Coleridge says, "the language of poetry without the poetry itself").

Coleridge nevertheless opposes (to some extent) Wordsworth's teaching on the subject of poetic diction, he himself having made much use of it in his own early poems. And he accuses Wordsworth of falling into fallacy in his use of the phrase "the real language of men." There are different classes of real men,—sailors, shepherds, country people and town's people, uneducated and educated. But they all speak in styles of language peculiar to themselves; and they are all "real men," and their various dialects are dialects of real

men. Which of these classes then are the "real men," whose speech, Wordsworth thinks, should be used in all poetry ?

Wordsworth had defended his use of the style of "humble and rustic people" in some of his poems in the *Lyrical Ballads*. Coleridge and other critics following him, think that he thereby (*a*) assumes the language of "humble and rustic people" to be the only "real language of men," and (*b*) therefore teaches that all poetry should be composed in the language of these people, and (*c*) that Wordsworth, in departing from this style in his own higher poems, thereby contradicts his own teaching, finding it impracticable. But is there any ground for these charges ?

What then does he really mean by the phrases "the real language of man," and "really used by men," which Coleridge finds so perplexing ? Wordsworth himself makes this clear enough in §§ 21-2. The poet may speak in either of two ways :

(1) He may "speak through the mouths of his characters" (*i.e.*, dramatically). What language then should he use in such cases ? All agree that he should make his other persons utter such thoughts and feelings as are natural to them, and express them in such language and style as they would naturally use—making sailors speak like sailors, shepherds like shepherds, educated people like other people of that class, and so on. Now these are "real men" and in making them speak thus, the

poet will be using "the language of real men." No one goes so far as to say that he should make other persons talk "poetic diction."

Or (2) he may "speak to us in his own person and character" expressing directly his own thoughts and feelings. What sort of language then should he use here? Wordsworth says that a poet when speaking in his own character, should speak his own language. His critics say no; when speaking for himself, he should speak *poetic* diction. But Wordsworth cannot see why he should not here also use "the language of real men," which in this case will mean the speech natural to the poet himself and others like him. These critics admit that in making others speak (dramatically), he should make them speak like themselves; but in speaking for himself, critics say, he should not speak like himself—he must speak an artificial dialect. But Wordsworth protests:—"The poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions; why then should his language differ from that of other men who think and feel in the same way?"—if he can express his thoughts as well in this natural way as in any other?

(Neither Coleridge nor his followers have answered this question. There is one way in which it might be approached. Wordsworth says that poetry is the expression of thought and feeling. The purpose of the poet is to express them in the best way possible. It will follow that

if he can express them better by using poetic diction than by "the language really spoken by men," then on his own principles, it is his duty to use poetic diction. But Wordsworth has himself met this suggestion in § 10 and elsewhere,—the best passages of every great poem are expressed in language as simple and common as that of prose, and evidently the natural language of the poet himself. Therefore artificial language is unnecessary.)

We can now see the *general principle* underlying his teaching with regard to the language of poetry. As poetry consists in the expression of certain kinds of thought and feeling, the best way of expressing them is that which will make them reach the mind in the simplest and most direct way,—without being weakened by intermixture with anything foreign and irrelevant. The depth and intensity of thought in which the sublime consists, can be conveyed only by the simplest words ; ornamental language (consisting largely of unnecessary periphrasis) turns thought aside and weakens the impression. And the simplest and most direct language will certainly be that which comes most naturally to writer and reader. And this will be "language really used by men." When the poet is speaking in his own person, the "real men" whose language should be used, will be the poet himself and those to whom he "addresses himself." When he makes others speak (dramatically) he will

make them also speak in the style natural to them—rustics like rustics, etc.

Wordsworth himself, however, uses the word "generally," meaning that his principle need not be taken to exclude cases in which the best possible expression may require words or phrases different from common language, as is often the case in the later plays of Shakespeare, in Milton, and sometimes (though rarely) in Wordsworth himself. Nevertheless, he reminds us that the greater part of all poems, and nearly all the best passages in poetry, are composed in language not essentially different from that of good prose and common life.

C. *Common incidents made interesting by "A colouring of imagination."*

But while describing things in language really used by men, he has "tried to throw over them, a certain colouring of imagination, whereby things shall be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect," and "to trace in them truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature."

Wordsworth here indicates casually what was to be the fundamental purpose of his own poetry. He was to deal often with common things, but he was to find deep meanings suggested everywhere—even "in the bare trees and mountains bare, and grass in the green field." And his spiritual theory of the world was to give a significance to things around him to which others were insensible. For the poet is

by nature a *seer*,—to his mind things are surrounded by a halo of spiritual suggestion—"a gleam, a light that never was on sea or land," and he has "moments of visitation from the most High God" in which "he can see into the life of things." And a poet he is distinguished from other seers in these ways: (1) he is endowed with power of imagination; that is, of embodying the truths which he sees, in concrete images or pictures, in which others can see what the poet sees, and thereby feel what he feels. Thus he can make common things interesting by making people see them in the light of new and unsuspected meanings, making the commonest thing to be a spring and centre of thought and feeling —a revelation of an infinite reality beyond—of the supernatural in the natural. This power of spiritual vision is the peculiar gift of the poet—"the vision and the faculty divine."

And finally (2) he can make common actions interesting by tracing in them "the primary laws of our nature": that is, showing that they are not stories constructed artificially for amusement, but rise naturally out of the depths of human life and character, and are therefore a revelation of truth.

Some charges against Wordsworth's Poetry.

§ § 6-8. Wordsworth "cannot remain insensible to the present outcry against the charges

of triviality and meanness both of thought and language" which had been made against his poems in the *Lyrical Ballads*.—These charges were made practically against all the poems. Those most open to them were those of dramatic form, in which rustic people are made to speak in their own style; or those in which the poet himself is speaking about such people, and semi-dramatically assumes, playfully to some extent, their style and speech. As applied to the more serious poems such as *Tintern Abbey* the charge only evinced lack of understanding on the part of the critic. How does he deal, then with these charges?

(*a*) As regards the charge of "trivial thought," he thinks that the charge has been advanced without due reflection. Every one of his poems has "a worthy *purpose*." For a poet is one who should be able to think and feel more deeply than other men; and each of these poems is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," and the feeling rises out of what the poet sees and thinks, and his purpose is to convey the same feeling and thought to other minds. And where the fundamental thought and feeling is a worthy one, nothing but good can come of such communication—the minds of readers are lifted above vulgar things, and habituated to elevated thought and feeling. This he claims is true of his poems in the *Ballads*, and therefore, when

rightly understood, they will be found not to be trivial.

"Another circumstance distinguishes his poems from the popular poetry of the day." In his poems, it is the thought and feeling developed in them that gives interest and importance to the story; it is not the story that gives interest to the poem. That is, the interest lies not in the story by itself, but chiefly in the meaning of the story. His purpose is not to excite his readers by "gross and violent stimulants," but to show them what is deep, wonderful and interesting even in common events. And he complains that people had acquired such a thirst for outrageous stimulation in literature, that they could no longer use their thinking power, and could only brood over what was exciting, sensational and horrible. This tendency may have had its root in the exciting and terrible political events to which they had been accustomed for the past decade—the events following on the revolution in France; and a sensational literature had sprung up to satisfy that craving—"frantic novels, sickly and stupid tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse." It was not to be wondered at therefore, that they no longer had any ear for such poems as his.

Wordsworth is here thinking evidently of the first crude attempts made in literature to meet

that change in public taste commonly called the Romantic movement,—the general dissatisfaction with the monotony, formality and tameness of 18th century literature. In the absence of any original genius, these attempts had taken the form of ghost stories and thrilling tragedies—the school of horror against which Jane Austen and other realists protested. Coleridge took advantage of this taste however to write a ghost story himself, *viz.*, the *Ancient Mariner*, but it was one with a deep meaning and therefore romantic in the proper sense. Wordsworth, who disliked all such departures from truth of real life, thought that the same feeling of mystery might be produced by a story of real life; and about the same time wrote his less successful story of *Peter Bell*, in which he tries to make a story of common life produce the same feeling of mystery which others produced by these stories of ghosts ("Brutus will start a ghost as soon as Cæsar" *i.e.*, a real man as well as an imaginary one). He himself indeed took up the supernatural, but in a different sense—to him the supernatural was *in* the natural—thereby giving to romantic spiritualism a new direction, *viz.*, that of transcendental thought. In this sense the whole of his poetry is a presentation of the supernatural.

§ 9. (*b*) As regards the charge of triviality of *style and language*, this brings back the question of "poetic diction." Wordsworth says that he has always "looked steadily at his subject," thereby to see it clearly as it is, along with the meanings and suggestions contained in it; and has sought always to express them in the simplest and most natural phraseology; and, in so doing,

to avoid all exaggeration and all merely ornamental verbiage which would give a false appearance to things: and give to prose thought the appearance of being poetry. This principle of simplicity and truth had made him avoid "almost entirely what is usually called poetic diction." Hence it has cut him off from a "large portion of the figures of speech which have long been regarded as the common inheritance of poets," and which had been, repeated by poet after poet, as if poetry had been impossible without them, or consisted in repeating them. Thus amongst these artifices of poets, he had generally avoided the personification of abstract ideas, which had been made so much use of by 18th century poets; and which, though sometimes used with good effect, had more frequently been merely "an ordinary device to give an appearance of elevation to the style, and raise it above prose." His purpose has been to bring the language of poetry back as near as possible to the real language of men; and he has hoped to create interest by the thought which he has put into his poems, and not by sensational stories or ornamental verbiage.

§ § 10-11. Indeed it seemed to be accepted as a "canon of criticism" at the time, that no composition could be accepted as poetry unless the words and phrases used in it, differed essentially from those used in prose. Against this, he

points out that a great part of every poem, and especially the best passages in every poem, are expressed in language essentially identical with that of prose when well written. In confirmation of this he quotes the one sonnet of Gray, and points out that the only lines in it of any value are in the language of prose, and that those in poetic diction are worthless. Thus Gray, instead of saying that day is dawning, says that "Reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire," which means that the light of morning is produced by some one called Phœbus, who lifts up a panful of brands which burn with a yellow flame, and the yellow flame makes the face of Phœbus red. But surely such "poetic diction" is worthless.

What language then should the poet use?
His own or an artificial one?

§ 12. What he has said hitherto on this subject has been intended mainly as explanation and justification of the language and style of the *Lyrical Ballads*. He has laid down, however, the general principle that poetry should be written in such language as is really used by men and not in any new one of its own making. The men with whom he has dealt in the *Ballads* have been mainly "humble and rustic people" and he has applied his principle by making them speak in a selection of language such as might be

understood and used among themselves. He does not indeed say that rustics and humble people are "all men," or that all poetry should be written in their dialect (which Coleridge and many critics practically accuse him of doing). But he now puts his principle in a more general form. The language "really used by men" is the language used in prose, and the one which they have learnt and practised from childhood, and which is therefore *natural* and common to all; and this language meets all the purposes of poetry. Indeed it may be safely affirmed as a principle that "there neither is nor can be any *essential* difference between the language of prose and that of metrical composition."

They differ in this, no doubt, that poetry is usually (though not necessarily) composed in metre; and that the poet must select and arrange his words more carefully and skilfully than is necessary in prose—with a view to bring out finer shades of meaning and harmony—but such differences do not involve any essential difference in the language used. Arbitrarily selected words (such as 'swain' for man, 'nymph' for woman) and unnecessary periphrases and figures and allusions add nothing to the meaning, and usually are nothing but artifices to make prose appear to be poetry—making trivial ideas seem to be important ones. Natural language is sufficient to express all that the poet needs to express.

What he has to express is his own thoughts and feelings; and the poet's thoughts and feelings are essentially the same in kind as those of other men, and do not require another language to express them. The poet may shed tears, but his tears are "not such tears as angels weep" (Milton), requiring an angelic language to give them expression; they are natural human tears, and human language is enough for them. His blood is not any celestial 'ichor' like that of the gods (in Homer), producing thought and passion which only a "language of the gods" could express. His blood is the same as that of other men, and there can be nothing in his mind which cannot be expressed by the language of other men.

§ 13. But does not metre require an essential difference? It is pointed out, that the poet usually writes in metre, and often in rhyme, and that these by themselves make an important difference between poetry and prose; and, further, that the poet in order to obtain metre and rhymes will often be compelled to use words and phrases, and orders of words, which would be out of place in prose. The answer is that metre serves a purpose of its own; but that a real poet does not need to make new words and phrases in order to make out his metres,—to him, the words will flow on as naturally and easily in metre as in prose. Indeed this is one of the

charms of metre. Only bad poets have to indulge in contortions of language in order to produce metre (thus one of the poetical gifts of Byron is the natural flow of his words, even in difficult metres such as the Spenserian and octave).

Indeed the real poet will find in the language "really spoken by men" and used by them in well written prose (avoiding vulgarity and coarseness), all that he needs for expression of his thought and feeling, for metre, for dignity of style, and for descriptive metaphor and all the other figures needed in poetry.

§ 14. It may be supposed that the above principle as to the language of poetry, is of no great practical importance—that poets do not use artificial poetic diction to such an extent as to make any very great difference to the value of their poetry. Wordsworth himself thinks, however that, if these principles be accepted, their acceptance will make a very great difference to our judgment of what is best in poetry, both ancient and modern. Poets may deceive their readers by artifices of language; they may use the *art* of expression to conceal the weakness of what is expressed—poetry may be poetry of *art* more than of thought. He thinks it necessary, therefore, to justify his principles by entering farther into the nature and purpose of poetry and the function of the poet in general.

What then is a poet? Wordsworth's theory.

§§ 15-16. "Taking up the subject, then, on general grounds, let me ask, What is a poet? To

whom does he address himself? What language is to be expected from him?" The answer is:—

A poet is a man in all essentials like other men. He speaks to other men just like himself. Therefore he will naturally speak the language common to himself and the men to whom he speaks.

But all men are not poets. What then makes a man to be a poet? The poet is distinguished from other men chiefly by these characteristics:—

(*a*) He is endowed with greater power of seeing and thinking than other men; and his intuitions and thoughts are not so much the result of *trying*, as in other men; they rise in his mind more spontaneously, as if by inspiration. And his thinking power is more comprehensive, and takes in a wider range of reality: so that he can picture things past, distant and future, actual and possible, more clearly than other men, and is affected by absent things as if they were present; and he has a deeper insight into human nature than other men, and is interested, above everything, in the feelings and volitions which rise in his own mind and the minds of others, as being the revelations of what is deepest in human nature. This is so much so, that he cannot help reading similar feelings into the things in the world round about him (see "Lines in Early Spring") and finding life everywhere.

In the natural he sees the supernatural; behind the physical he sees the spiritual. And the deepest element in poetry is the revelation of the inner meanings contained even in simple things.

(*b*) And further, "he is endowed with more lively sensibility, enthusiasm and tenderness than other men"; not only does he see and think, but the things which he sees and thinks about, make deeper impressions on his mind than on other men, exciting stronger feelings (such as wonder, fear, anger, pity and compassion, indignation, gratitude and the like); and he has more enthusiasm for communicating what he sees, thinks and feels to other men, and to rouse in them the same feelings of wonder, gratitude, pity and the like, and the actions to which such feelings lead; and by thus affecting the minds of men, a great poet makes himself to be a power in the world, and generally for good.

(*c*) But he has to be endowed also with greater power of expression than other men. This is the most distinctive characteristic of the poet; without this he would be but "a mute inglorious Milton." For poetry is an expression of thought and truth. It agrees thus far with science. But it expresses truth not wholly for truth's own sake as science does, but truth in so far as it touches directly human feeling; and it expresses it not by abstraction but by making

it visible to the mind's eye in imagery, and with such colour and harmony as will touch the feelings. The poet has the power of seeing this kind of truth and expressing it in mental pictures, and it is this mainly that makes him to be a poet.

Thus in short, the poet is one who sees meanings in nature and life which others do not see, and feels the bearings of the truths which he sees on human life for good and ill, and has the gift of embodying them in language which will make others also see and feel them.

How a poem is composed.

From the above, then, we *can see how a poem is composed.* "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity" (§ 25).

The poet observes and thinks more deeply than other men, and what he sees and thinks excites deeper feelings in his mind, and he writes guided by thought, but under the impulse of feeling. What he sees, however exciting to him it may be, is excluded for the moment from his mind by the inrush of other impressions, but it has sunk deep into his mind, and in a time of leisure revives in idea,—"flashes on his inward eye"—and revives the feeling connected with it (pity, wonder, anger and the like). His feeling

impels him to give full expression to the idea out of which it rises, and communicate it to others. Until this is done, he cannot rest. He is like the ancient prophet who felt that he had a message to deliver, and felt it a burden on his mind until delivered. Or he feels like the Ancient Mariner, who had no peace until he had told his story. It is so with the really great poet. He writes not to amuse himself but because he has something to say, a message to deliver. Under this impulse, therefore, the fundamental idea works itself out into a system of related ideas, and expresses them in words. And at last, when the original idea and feeling has found that full expression and embodiment by which it may be communicated to other minds, the poet is satisfied. When Wordsworth sees the daffodils waving their heads by the side of the lake, or Shelley hears the lark singing invisible in the sky, or Keats hears the nightingale, he is deeply impressed, but for the moment only—other experiences suppress his feeling for the time being. But it has taken deep root in his sensitive mind, and in solitude it comes to life again and expands into a poem. Hence the process may be further analysed thus—

(1) There is first, the something seen or heard which excites the poet's feeling strongly and which may be excluded at the moment of being experienced, but which fixes itself in his

memory and revives when all distractions are removed. But the revived idea is incomplete at first, like a germ in the soil. In his mind there is an irresistible impulse to give it full expression by bringing back ideas of other things that illustrate it, or have been connected with it in the past, and associating them all together into one whole of thought and feeling, in which the content and meaning of the fundamental idea will be fully expressed, as the life of the germ is fully expanded in the plant.

(2) But thought and feeling by themselves are but "airy nothing," and incommunicable to other persons. Therefore the impulse to give the idea and feeling full expansion, is accompanied by an impulse to fix them, and give them physical existence (so to speak) by putting them into suitable words, in which their whole meaning will be embodied and made permanent and communicable. And poetical expression of truth differs from scientific in this: in the poet's mind, thought spontaneously evolves and embodies itself in concrete images or pictures,—descriptions, incidents, metaphors, with meanings in them which can be *seen*, and do not need to be inferred. Poetry is thinking in pictures; science, thinking in abstract notions and propositions.

It follows from the above that a real poem is not *made* but *grows* (Shelley). The poet does not

really *make* it; Shelley scoffs at the idea of making a poem. It evolves itself in the poet's mind as a plant grows in the soil. The "creative" impulse (proceeding from a "something far more deeply interfused" which transcends the poet's mind—being the life of nature itself) enters into the fundamental idea and makes it expand itself into the many contributory ideas contained in it or associated with it; and makes it attain for itself full expression in the poem as a whole—somewhat as the life of nature enters into the germ, and makes it unfold itself into stem, branches, leaves and finally, "the bright consummate flower."

Whence then does the "creative" impulse come? Does it come from nothing deeper than the poet's own sub-conscious mind? Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley think that it has a deeper source than that—that it comes from the life of nature—from a "something far more deeply interfused" than the individual soul. That soul can "feed itself in a wise passiveness," *i.e.*, in receiving impulses from a deeper power. "One impulse from a vernal wood" may reveal to the poet more than "all the sages can"; *viz.*, make new intuitions and thoughts flash into his mind. In other words, poetry is natural inspiration, not art. The same power which evolves things in nature below, rises up into the poet's mind, and evolves ideas there. This is the essence of—

The romantic conception of Poetry.

Hence *Romanticism*, in the proper sense of the word and as understood by Schlegel and German romanticists : (1) Great poetry must be spontaneous and sincere and, to be that, it must be an expression of the poet's own time and people. It is the 'time-spirit,' as it were, that concentrates itself in him and makes him to be its deepest voice, so that he writes not by art of his own but by inspiration of his time and circumstances. Thus Homer because he gave sincere and natural expression to the mind of primitive Greece, and Dante and Milton who did the same for Catholic Italy and Puritan England, were truer poets than Virgil and Tasso ; who tried to reconstruct past times of which they knew little, and therefore produced artificial work,—not a true product of the time-spirit—and were for that reason inferior as poets, however great their art.

Underlying all the action of men there is an impulse towards the attainment of something higher and better. Action may aim directly at utility or play or pleasure, but even utility and play are channels through which an aspiration towards some higher satisfaction manifests itself. This aspiration produces in mind a "divine discontent" with what is presented in experience, and an unceasing effort to think out something more perfect. Hence the imaginative power is engaged in an unceasing effort to see and give expression to something higher and better (Shelley).

(2) The inspiration which comes, as thus assumed, from the inner life of nature, brings with it a conviction that behind the outward appearances of things there is a depth of mysterious power, and therefore a possibility of wonders and mysteries from which the imagination of the poet can freely draw, and in which mind can escape from the platitudes of actual life. Hence this new movement in poetry, so strongly opposed to the mechanism of the 18th century, has been called a "renascence of wonder." This tendency to deepen thought by spiritualising nature, may be regarded as the fundamental element in romanticism. Romantic poetry does not merely describe the outside of things, but shows things to be suggestive of a world of reality beyond themselves.

(3) And this fundamental character of romanticism carries with it certain other characters as consequences. The thought which thus comes spontaneously finds words spontaneously, and these will be the words which come first and most naturally to the mind of the poet, and these will be the language made familiar by daily use—the real language spoken by himself and his fellows, and not any artificial diction. This conclusion was drawn by Wordsworth especially.

(4) And the deep truths of nature will manifest themselves as much in the natural lives of the "humble" as in the more artificial lives of the high and mighty, and make the lives

of the lowly to contain as much poetry as those of the highest.

Thus romanticism was essentially a conviction of transcendental powers working in and revealing themselves in the outward phenomena of nature and life, and entering into, and influencing the mind of the poet, and making true poetry to be a product of inspiration more than of art,—making it to grow spontaneously in the poet's mind rather than to be *made* by the poet—and giving preference to natural language and natural life. This has been called "romantic" as having much in common with the spirit of the literature of the Romance or Romanic languages (13th and 14th centuries). The word has come to be used rather loosely for all narrative where the interest depends largely on novelty, wonder, mystery, surprise and adventure. But the movement was essentially a reaction against the mechanical philosophy of the 18th century, which tended to reduce nature to lifeless machinery, and human thought to the calculation of practical interest and utility.

And hence the mistake of treating the descriptive poets of the 18th century (Thomson and his school) as if they were romanticists. Generally speaking, these poets see only the outside of things, and hardly do more than catalogue their external appearances. They have little or no feeling for the depth, wonder, mystery, and spiritual suggestiveness of nature which is the

essence of romanticism. Lessing was thinking of this school when he depreciated descriptive poetry as a vain attempt to do with words, what only painters could do with colours. But the poetry of descriptions (when really poetical) does not consist in being accurate copies of things (as Lessing supposed) but in the ideas and feelings with which they fill the mind by suggestion. Some anticipation of true romantic feeling and insight is met with in Collins, Chatterton, and more especially, Blake.

The place of art in poetry.

§§ 17-18. But he admits that "however exalted an idea we may cherish of the character of a poet," the reality will never come up altogether to the ideal; that is, the inspiration of nature will never be exhaustive, and in his work there will generally be something that is "mechanical" and artificial. This is seen especially in the dramatic part of his work, *i.e.*, in expressing the feelings of other minds. To give spontaneous expression to the feelings of others, he would have to reproduce them with exactitude in his own mind. This he may be unable to do (unless he is a dramatist of the highest power). Therefore he will be unable to obtain language so exquisitely fitted for the feeling "as that in which real passion expresses itself." He will be somewhat in the position of a translator who has thought and feeling supplied to him by his original, but has to find for himself the

best words to express them in. The poet's native spontaneity, must be reinforced by an effort to find the best form of expression for what comes spontaneously, and this effort of expression involves some amount of dexterity and art.

This voluntary effort will coincide with what Coleridge calls "secondary imagination," or the element of art which the poet has to supply by effort of his own will, to supplement the impulses which come from nature, and to mould them into a unitary whole. Shelley, on the contrary, seems to depreciate everything of the nature of art in poetry, and to ascribe the whole to nature. Increased regard for the artistic element in poetry is what mainly distinguishes the "Victorian School" of poetry from the earlier romantic.

But the fundamental part of Wordsworth's theory of poetry, *viz.*, that it is a revelation of truth, a communication of knowledge, raises the question of the relation between poetry and science.

Relation of Poetry and Science.

Poetry is essentially a revelation of truth. But science also is a revelation of truth. Therefore we have to consider the difference between science and poetry.

It is often said in depreciation of poetry that it is only a means of producing pleasure. But science also produces pleasure. They both produce that kind of pleasure which consists

in *knowing*—poetry and science *agree* in producing the pleasure of knowledge. But if they agree in producing knowledge, in what respects do they differ? The difference between them, then, must have regard to the kind of truth which they reveal or knowledge which they convey. Now—

(*a*) They differ in the way in which they obtain the knowledge which they give—the truth which they reveal;

(*b*) they differ as to the kind of truth which they discern, express and communicate;

(*c*) they differ in the way in which they give expression to the knowledge which they convey.

(*a*)

As to the ways in which they obtain their knowledge of truth.—Science begins with concrete things as they present themselves in experience, and proceeds by analysis, generalisation and inference—taking individual things to pieces and abstracting from them what is general and universal in them all, thus drawing out of them their essences, laws and conditions, causes and effects, and expressing these in abstract definitions and general propositions.—Thus it proceeds, in the main, from the concrete and individual to the abstract and universal. Its methods therefore are analysis and inference.

The poet, on the contrary, does not *analyse* nor *infer*; he *sees* with the power of intuitive insight given him by nature—he casts his sight "through earth and sea and air," and sees deep truths of nature and life,—the relations, reasons and consequences of things. In his moments of "visitation from the most high God, he sees into the heart of things." And what he sees in nature and life, fills his mind with feelings of wonder, gratitude, hope, fear, indignation, pity and the like; and what he sees and feels is a burden on his mind until he has expressed it fully in words, and made it permanently accessible to other minds.

For the truths which poetry deals with, *viz.*, those which touch human feelings, are truths which can be *seen* and *felt* intuitively, without inference, as soon as the circumstances are presented; and the method of poetry is not to enable us to *infer* truths as a scientific treatise does, but to make us *see* them ourselves, with the mind's eye, *i.e.*, as embodied in concrete imagery.

(*b*)

As to the ways in which they express and communicate truth. As science reduces the world of concrete things to a world of abstract laws, so it describes its world of abstractions in abstract terms and general propositions, and reduces these, wherever possible, to mathematical formulæ. In short, it speaks in abstractions.

Poetry proceeds in the opposite way. It seizes on thoughts and feelings in themselves vague and intangible, and embodies them in concrete images or pictures—descriptions and metaphors—in which they can be *seen* by the mental eye, reflected or expressed as soul is expressed in body. A poem is made to be a living organism; the meaning (*i.e.*, the fundamental idea which expands itself into the poem) is, as it were, the soul of the organism, and in this organism we can see the meaning as we "see the soul's construction in the face." Thus, while science tries to reduce thought more and more completely to abstractions and formulæ, poetry tries to speak more and more in pictures, in which the meaning can be seen by the mind's eye without analysis or inference. Its faculty is not understanding, but imagination, or power of reducing abstract thought to concrete imagery. (See Imagination and Fancy.)

(*c*)

As to the kind of truth which they reveal: science regards things as they are by themselves, and apart from all regard for human interests and feelings; and values truth for its own sake, whatever bearing it may have on human feeling and fate.

Poetry rises out of the interest which men feel in the destiny of mankind, and takes for

its sphere, those truths or aspects of truth which have most direct bearing on human well-being, and touch most directly human interests. It is " the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," and the feelings spring out of what is known or thought about those things which touch most closely the interests and destiny of men (fear, hope, pity, anger, etc.). Real feelings rise out of things known to be real, and weaker feelings, out of things known only to be possible—which is poetry of Imagination. And here is a kind of poetry which gives pleasure by picturing things which are merely conceived to be, and conceiving faintly the feelings which they would produce, if they were real,—which is poetry of Fancy.

Thus the things or ideas of things which rise into poetry are those which do, or may, or might affect the welfare, and touch the feelings of men.

Hence there is no opposition between science and poetry except in method. Both reveal truth. Indeed " poetry is the breath and finer spirit that is in all knowledge ": that is, to us the innermost essence of all truth is that element of truth which affects most directly our well-being and touches our feelings; and it is this aspect of truth that the poet sees and reveals to others in his pictorial imagery. It is therefore " the impassioned expression which is

on the face of all science" (that is, if science be personified as a genius or goddess who knows and reveals truth to mankind, and at the same time feels sympathy with men, then her face will wear an impassioned expression of pity or gladness, according as the truths which she has to reveal are good or bad for men—one of the few personifications made by Wordsworth.) Poetry is a translation into words of this expression of the goddess.

Hence poetry cannot die out.

It follows from this relation of poetry to science that poetry cannot die out (as Peacock, Hazlitt, Macaulay and others were inclined to think). It must live as long as science itself. For the whole world stands in relation to humanity, and every new truth that science can reveal will have some bearing on the well-being and destiny of men, and will therefore touch human feeling, and supply material for poetry. When once their bearing on the innermost system of the world comes to be understood, and thereby their connection with the destiny of man comes to be seen,—"when they come to put on a form of flesh and blood,"—then " the remotest discoveries of the chemist, botanist and mineralogist, not to speak of

astronomer and geologist, will be found to be proper objects of the poet's art."

Hence the error of those who imagine that there is a contradiction between science and poetry, and that the advance of science must ultimately abolish poetry. Such an idea is founded on a wrong conception of the nature and function of poetry. They assume that all poetry is—like that of Homer and the mediæval romances—founded on belief in the actual presence of gods and goddesses, fairies, demons, angels and devils, overlooking and taking part in the affairs of men. But science is irresistibly undermining and destroying such beliefs. Therefore it is taking away all foundation for poetry. But Wordsworth shows how poetry can be based on simple truth, and that the advance of science can only reveal deeper and deeper truths affecting human kind, and widen the realm of wonder and mystery, and give wider scope for human thought and feeling. Poetry is founded on knowledge: "It is the first and last of all knowledge; it is immortal as the heart of man."

Hence the proper language of poetry.

§ 21. This theory of poetry brings back again the old question as to the proper language for poetry. If poetry is the spontaneous expression of thought and feeling, then the best language

for poetry must be that in which thought and feeling most spontaneously embody themselves. And that will be the language which comes most directly and naturally to the poet and his readers; and that again will be the language which is common to both, and therefore the language really used by the class of men to which they belong—a "language really spoken by men." Such spontaneous flow of thought and feeling cannot be supposed "to deviate from the real language of nature." "The poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions," which are common to all men; "why should his language in any material degree differ from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly." Poetry by its very nature is inconsistent with any artificial language such as the various kinds of "poetic diction."

Why does the poet write in verse?

§§ 22-25. But if the poet is to confine himself as far as possible to the language used in prose and common intercourse, why should he depart so far from that style, as to write in verse. Is not this a contradiction of his principle? Surely verse involves a wide departure from the style of prose. The answer is that, so far as the language used is concerned, it does not. Metre has to do only with the harmony

of the language used, and with the arrangement of words into clauses, sentences and paragraphs. And further, verse serves a purpose of its own, which has nothing to do with "poetic diction." What then is the use of metre and verse ?

Poetry aims at the perfect expression of thought and feeling. The principal means of expressing thought and feeling is by language. But there is yet another means. Music expresses thought to some extent, and feeling in a very high degree. Therefore the expressive power of poetry will be greatly increased if we can combine music with poetry. This is done in song ; where the accompanying air greatly increases the emotional effect of the poem. But in the case of song and instrumental accompaniments, the music is added on to the poetry from the outside, and artificially. The effect will be better if the music can be drawn out of the poem itself ; that is, if the poem itself can be made musical, and music of its words themselves can be made to increase the expressive power of the words. This is accomplished to some extent in metre and versification. These are the art of making words musical, or of bringing out the music which is in them. The sound is thereby made to be "an echo to the sense," deepening the thought and feeling expressed. Thus metre, being itself a power of expression, may be considered an integral part of poetry.

Hence in the best metrical compositions the metre will be made to vary with the feeling expressed in the poem. The most elaborate effort to accomplish fusion of sound and meaning, is seen in the compositions called 'choral odes,' such as Dryden's *St. Cecilia*, Pope's *St. Cecilia*, Gray's *Poesy*, Collins's *The Passions*.

Another effect of metre is often referred to, *viz.*, its calming and soothing effect on the mind. Tragical or pathetic scenes (*e.g.*, in *Othello*) may excite the feelings to a painful degree. The effect is softened by the harmony of the language, and made to be more agreeable than painful.

Thus as the thought of the poet naturally passes into language so his language naturally takes a musical form. Hence it has been said that one who has "no music in his soul" cannot be a great poet.

But we shall have to consider what, when applied to poetry, the word music really means. Music, in the literal sense, is sound, and sound gives only one of the many kinds of harmony. Words affect our ears and produce sounds, and the sounds may be harmonious, and their harmony is music proper. But how are the words produced? By a complicated set of muscles in chest, throat and mouth. Now the feelings of harmony and discord which we feel in connection with words, are felt mainly by the muscles which pronounce them, and not by the ears. This means that the harmony of language, the music of poetry, is largely a muscle-feeling, and not music in the literal sense.

This is explained under " Rhythm and Harmony of Language."

Other charges against Wordsworth's poetry.

§§ 26-30. In the earlier parts of the *Preface* he has replied to the principal charges made against the *Lyrical Ballads*. Then after his long digression on poetry in general, he turns back to deal with some minor charges. Thus some had accused him of frequently using "words and phrases" which to them seemed "mean and ludicrous." He admits that sometimes phrases which to himself seemed "tender and pathetic," might to others be suggestive of something ludicrous; but such minor differences of taste are unavoidable. They arise from differences of experience. In one person's experience a word may have become associated with something painful and pathetic, as with sorrow and death; to him, therefore, that word will ever afterwards rouse a feeling of sadness in his mind. To another person, the same may, in his experience, have been connected with something mean or ludicrous; therefore that same feeling will cling to the word ever afterwards. But such differences of association are rare and unimportant; and if the poet were to attach much importance to them, and try to please every one in such matters, all liberty of thought and expression would be lost.

Wordsworth was certainly defective in sense of humour, and this defect led him sometimes to use expressions which to most other people seemed ludicrous. Thus in one of his *Ballads* he had occasion to mention a 'tub.' The theory of poetic diction would exclude such a word simply because a tub is a common thing, without dignified associations. But Wordsworth thought fit to add the explanation: "'Twas one of those that women use to wash their clothes," thus unnecessarily forcing on the attention of the reader, a cluster of perhaps undignified associations. He afterwards saw this, and removed the phrase.

§§ 27-31. He complains also of another "false criticism." Some think that a verse composed of such simple words as a child might understand, must for that reason be childish. Johnson criticised the traditional ballads (Percy's *Reliques*) as childish because they contain many verses in simple popular language, and thought to confirm this opinion of his, by composing *extempore* a verse of his own, in words of the same kind (meaning that that verse of his was just as good as the ballad)—that people might see how worthless such poetry was. But he forgot that poetry consists in the meaning conveyed, not in the words used. The meaning conveyed by Johnson's parody is nonsensical. The traditional ballads are always full of real meaning, however simple the language may be.

Johnson's criticism here illustrates the weakness of his own and much 18th century

criticism—the belief that poetry consists largely in the words used—in "splendour of diction"—"in long-tailed, words in -osity and -ation"—as if the meaning conveyed were a matter of secondary importance.

The conclusion of Wordsworth's inquiry (as also that of Coleridge) is that—

A new kind of poetry is needed.

Poetry is needed which will express real thought and feeling in the real language of men. He admits, however, that there will have to be a great change in public taste and in theory of poetry, before such poetry as he has been recommending, can become popular. Many have derived great pleasure from poetry written with the "splendour of poetic diction" characteristic of the period; and it will be difficult for them ever to appreciate poetry written in the language of real life, and which depends for its interest mainly on the thought conveyed. Nevertheless, he thinks that, if they would consider the subject clearly, they would come to see that the principles which he has laid down would lead to poetry of greater variety and deeper meaning, and of more permanent and universal interest, than poetry founded on superficial and transitory fashions—such as the classical imitation and poetic diction of the 18th century. Accordingly, the poetry of the *Lyrical Ballads* and the criticism of the *Preface* may be

regarded as an anticipation of what has been deepest and most original in the poetry and criticism of the 19th century.

Origin of "Poetic Diction."

Being anxious to give an exact notion of the sense in which the phrase "poetic diction" has here been used, Wordsworth "adds a few words concerning the origin and character of the phraseology which he has condemned under that name."

"The earliest poets generally wrote from real passion excited by real events." They were witnesses of events which excited real feelings in their minds and made them think; and their thought and feelings found expression in that language which came to them naturally —*viz.*, that really used by themselves and those to whom they spoke. Hence their thought, feelings and words were those of real men, and were natural and sincere. They wrote what they really thought and felt, expressing themselves in the words and figures which came to them by nature, and their work was spontaneous and sincere.

Later writers were impressed by the effect produced by these earlier writers, and wished to produce the same. But they were without their sincerity and spontaneous inspiration. They

could make up for this want only in an artificial way. They thought they could produce the same effects by repeating the words, phrases, figures and style of the earlier writers, and by inventing new phrases and figures similar to theirs. Their thought might be commonplace, their feelings might be affected; but they might give their work the appearance of being high poetry by repeating or imitating the style and phraseology of the great poets.

This practice manifested itself in different ways at different times. Thus in England when the power of spontaneous and original thought which characterised the Elizabethan outburst, began to wane, many second-class writers thought to attain distinction by imitating the artifices of thought and expression into which Italian literature had fallen in its decline. Then wearied by the extravagance and obscurity of the "Italianate," euphuistic, metaphysical and "conceited" styles, the poets of the Restoration took to imitating the simpler style of French and Latin writers. Dryden, and afterwards Pope, imitated them, but generally surpassed their originals. In course of time however, imitation descended to the use of words and phrases, allusions and metaphors, appeals to the Muses and the like (which Coleridge ridicules). The classical or "grand style" was aimed at, but, in the absence of original power, it was sought by such artifices as

avoiding particular things and facts, and speaking in generalities. Common words and phrases were thought mean like common things, and avoided by the use of round-about phrases in sounding words; or might be made to appear poetical by personification with capital initials.

This style was encouraged by the powerful example of Johnson, the literary dictator of the middle century, and became predominant towards the end. Among the longer works in which it is predominant, Darwin's *Botanic Garden*, Roger's *Pleasures of Memory* and Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*, may be mentioned. Cowper was not altogether free. Some effects of it can be seen even in Burns and Blake, the most original poets of the period.

In what then does the Beauty of a poem consist?

Poetry has been at all times essentially the same thus far: it has been the expression of human feeling and aspiration put into ideas and words (its substance) so co-ordinated and harmonized as to form in each case one organic whole of thought and feeling (its form). But something seems to be wanting in this description. Poetry is at the same time one of the various efforts which people make to satisfy the desire for the beautiful (the fine arts). In the above analysis of poetry no mention is made of the "beautiful."

Granted then that the above is a sufficient statement of the elements, we are confronted by

the further question : in which of these elements does the beauty of the poem lie ? We may receive two answers :

(*a*) The *Form*-theory or theory of *expression*, that the beauty of the poem consists simply in this : that it gives expression to a certain thought in the most complete and satisfactory way—which is by making the one fundamental idea develop itself into many subordinate and contributory ideas, and at the same time making them ' co-operate ' together in one comprehensive whole of thought and feeling,—producing thus a harmonius unification of many in one. This harmony of many in one is the secret of life itself—of the creative work of nature—of the delight which we derive from contemplation of the flower, the building, the system of the heavens. It is therefore the essence of the beautiful in general. And the harmony of many parts in the one process of expression, is the whole beauty of a poem. A poem is indeed an expression of truth, and its beauty lies in the art of its expression.

The importance of harmony of structure is fully recognised by Coleridge as condition at least ; and he points out the complexity of poetic harmony by showing that in a complex poem, every part should be beautiful when considered by itself (like the similes of Homer and Milton), and at the same harmonize with all the rest in

such a way as to contribute to the beauty of the poem as a whole.

This view that all art is expression and that its beauty consists in the form of expression and may have nothing to do with what is expressed, is taught by Croce, the most important of recent writers on theory of poetry and art. It is a main characteristic also of the type of poetry called classical.

(*b*) There is also what may be called the *Substance*-theory. We can see that Wordsworth would have rejected very decidedly the theory of Form. Poetry is certainly the expression of truth, but its essential beauty does not consist mainly in the Form or way in which it expresses truth, but in the truth which it expresses. The mind has been striving to find expression for its thought and feeling, but what satisfies it, is not the expression by itself, but the thought and feeling themselves when fully expressed. The beauty of the poem lies in what it expresses; the words and figures are only means to an end, so that their beauty is subordinate to their purpose.

It is true that nature proceeds by evolving many, and co-ordinating the many into higher unities. But in all its stages it rises from lower to higher quality; the new stage is not a mere reproduction of the lower but something higher and better. Thus through its instrument, the poet, nature aims not at merely reproducing truths of a lower stage, but at revealing and expressing

truths of a higher order—things which are good and beautiful in themselves, apart from expression, and such that thinking and practising them will tend to elevate mankind.

Beauty therefore is something more than form of expression—something lying mainly in what is expressed. Beauty of expression is only subordinate and contributory. Poetry which consists in little more than beauty of expression (*e.g.*, in music of words, brightness of pictures and harmony of parts), as in some of Tennyson's early poems and many of Swinburne's, will not be of the highest kind.

PART II.

Imagination and Fancy in Poetry.

Poetry is power of seeing deeply into the nature and relations of things and discerning truths contained in or rising out of them, and of giving these truths embodiment in ideas more or less concrete and pictorial, in which they can be seen by others without effort of reasoning.

These powers (along with command of language) constitute together the gift of poetry. The deeper of the two is evidently the power of insight into truth—"the vision and the faculty divine." The next is the power of making truths, at first vague and abstract, work themselves out into ideas in which they will be concrete, permanent, and communicable.

This power of giving expression to thought in concrete ideas is Imagination (taken in its widest sense). Hence poetry has been often defined as "the expression of the Imagination, and it has been described sometimes as the special faculty of poetry. But it is a power which requires some special study, and Coleridge undertook to give, in his work on poetry, a full psychological study of the subject, but left the work incomplete.

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Imagination (Latin) means literally the making of *images*, but is always restricted to the making of mental images or pictorial ideas. Fancy or Phantasy (Greek) means the producing of appearances which have no substantial reality (phantoms). Therefore, etymologically, the two words mean practically the same thing.

In conversation and literature they have been used with a difference, but only a vague one. Fancy is commonly used for thought of a playful, whimsical and somewhat frivolous kind, having little or no regard to reality. Imagination is used for imagery of a more serious kind, which might possibly correspond to reality.

Wordsworth took up this popular but vague distinction, and deepened it. He made these meanings more definite, and made them correspond to a real difference between two kinds of poetry, which critics had overlooked. Coleridge, following Wordsworth, went deeper still, showing that they have their roots in two distinct needs of mind, leading to two distinct processes of thought, and resulting, as Wordsworth had shown, in two distinct kinds of poetry—poetry of play and pleasure, and poetry of truth.

These two kinds of poetry correspond in the main to two different theories of the use, meaning or reason of poetry. (*a*) The theory of "art for art's own sake" (and therefore of poetry

for poetry's own sake), assumes that poetry is something good in itself and for its own sake, and explains the *goodness* for which it is written and read as consisting in its *pleasurableness*,—pleasure being assumed to be the one "good in itself." Poetry is art, and the purpose of art is pleasure for its own sake. (*b*) The theory that poetry in its highest sense is a revelation of truth, and that its worth and excellence consists in the truth which it reveals (its substance). This theory need not wholly exclude pleasure from poetry because it must be admitted that its revelation of truth makes it to be at the same time a source of pleasure. But the pleasure in this case is not sought for its own sake, but rises as consequence out of the attainment of truth, and is therefore different in kind from the former pleasure.

There will, therefore, be two kinds of poetry: one kind aiming wholly or mainly at the production of pleasure, considered as something good in itself; and another kind aiming mainly at the communication of truth, the pleasure which rises out of truth being not an end in itself, but only a consequence.

Now these two kinds of poetry—poetry of pleasure and poetry of thought—will correspond in the main to the functions of Fancy and Imagination as distinguished by Wordsworth and Coleridge.

(*a*) *Poetry of Play.*

What then will Fancy be? Fancy aims directly only at the production of pleasure, and the pleasure at which it aims is that of exercise as play, and the play, is play of mind. Most people have always more vital power than is used up in the practical work of life. The surplus, if repressed, would be a source of uneasiness; the exercise of it is a source of health and pleasure. This surplus energy may overflow spontaneously in the form of physical play as in games; or it may take the form of mental activity, and this will mean playing with ideas. When one is at rest physically, the otherwise unemployed and irrepressible energy of mind finds employment in raising past experiences into consciousness in the form of ideas, and forming them into new combinations—into clusters and trains different from any actually experienced. Thus the surplus activity of mind (guided by the predominant desire) flows on spontaneously from one idea to another (following the line of strongest suggestion and therefore least resistance)—producing a current of ideas which streams past before the inward eye; and the self has the pleasure of activity, variety and novelty, without putting forth any effort of its own to produce them; and the pleasure of dwelling for the time being in a new world of its own—set free from the troubles of the real world.

This spontaneity of the creative process may not always be complete. More or less effort of will, indeed, may be needed to arrange the rising ideas into orders and combinations which will suit some purpose. But Fancy is found in its most elementary form in fairy tales, in which it is purely spontaneous. Of these, many originated, doubtless, thousands of years ago, in the childhood of humanity; and have been transmitted orally, undergoing modification in successive ages. These the early German romanticists eagerly collected (*e.g.* Grimm) and imitated them (*e.g.* Musaeus) believing that they grew spontaneously out of the minds of primitive people as plants grow in the soil; and embody in themselves the beliefs and habits of primitive men. Modern folk-lorists collect and study them for the same purposes.

Modern imitations however are to some extent works of literary art, and do not contain the same wealth of meaning as the traditional ones —*e.g.* those of Mrs. Ewing, George Macdonald, Lord Dunsany. Ruskin's one attempt, *The King of the Golden River*, is one of the best of this class. In higher literature we may regard the *Faery Queene* as essentially a fairy tale, for though Spenser wrote it to convey moral meanings, most readers probably read it as play of the mind. The class includes the many artistic revivals of the fairy legends of early Greece and mediaeval Europe, as by Keats and Morris.

Poetry of Fancy, therefore, is not poetry of the highest kind,—its purpose being the pleasure

of mental play mainly. The child plays physically with toys and in games : but he can play mentally also, as in hearing and reading fairy tales. But poets of the higher kind also, find relaxation in the sphere of Fancy, as Wordsworth in "Poems of Fancy"—"here let me sit and *play* with similes." Keats began with Fancy, ("ever let the Fancy roam, pleasure never is at home,") as in *Endymion* especially, and *Lamia* mainly, but began to rise to graver thought in later poems as in his *Odes* and *Sonnets*. Milton's *L'Allegro* may be referred to as a fine example of Fancy. Shelley's *Cloud* carries Fancy to its utmost limit.

(*b*) *Poetry of Thought.*

Many critics seemed to see in poetry little beyond the play of Fancy; and to judge a poem mainly by the number of picturesque (picture-like) passages to be found in it (Jeffrey, Hazlitt, Hunt, Macaulay), thinking little of the underlying thought, which finds expression in Imagination. Many who appreciated Scott and Keats—poets of Fancy largely—failed entirely to appreciate Wordsworth, a poet of Imagination. But Imagination has a higher function than Fancy. It makes *images* as Fancy does, but not for the purpose of amusement merely. It is an organ of truth. It is a power of discerning truth, and evolving at the same time *imagery* in which it will be

expressed, embodied and made visible to the eye of mind, and communicated (with the help of language) from one mind to another.

For according to Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley, the highest function of poetry is to express truth, with the feelings to which it gives rise, and its organ for the expression of truth is Imagination. Science expresses truth in abstractions, reached and grasped by reasoning; poetry, in concrete imagery in which it can be seen by the inner eye intuitively. The poet has the power of seeing and feeling truth directly; and is further distinguished by this power of embodying (so to speak) what he sees and feels in concrete pictures, in which others can see and feel them. The power by which he does so is Imagination; and the word (though its literal meaning is image-making in general) should be restricted to this power of expressing thought in mental imagery. By the power of intuitive insight which distinguishes him from most other men, he *sees* deep truths of nature and life; and by this power of imagination which distinguishes him from other seers, he embodies ideas and feelings, in themselves abstract, in concrete ideas which impress themselves as pictures on his mind; and by his command of language, he expresses his ideas in words by which they are conveyed, without loss of clearness, to other minds.

This is what Shelley means by saying that "poetry may be defined in a general sense as

the expression of the imagination." Wordsworth has given the word a definite meaning which it did not possess before. And, thus understood, it may be said to be the most characteristic endowment of the poet. It must not be supposed however that Imagination is opposed to science in all things. Various sciences require vivid pictorial conceptions of things, and imaginative reconstructions. Indeed geology consists largely in pictorial reconstruction of things of the past. History also strives after vivid presentations of persons and events. Carlyle was the first historian to aim at making events pass like pictures before the mental eye of the reader—as in his *Revolution*, his *Cromwell* and *Frederick the Great*.

Imagination and Art.

Coleridge, following the philosopher Schelling, attaches very deep philosophical significance to this power of productive, or 'creative' and organising, imagination. It is a repetition in the finite mind of the original act of creation in the infinite "*I am*." As the absolute power gives out life, and makes life evolve the world of organic things which are its concrete embodiment and expression, so the finite life-power which works in the poet's mind lays hold of some truth of nature or life, and makes it unfold

itself into an organism of ideas in which it is permanently embodied and expressed as soul in body.

This spontaneous working of the creative life of nature through the poet's mind, is *primary* imagination. But Coleridge gives more importance to art than Wordsworth and Shelley. The poet, by effort of his own will, can *react* on the ideas which thus rise spontaneously in his mind as if they came by inspiration; and can make them assume such orders and forms as will suit the particular end which he has in view. This voluntary modification is *secondary* imagination, and is evidently an element of art. Hence according to Coleridge, the poet himself will have more to do in the making of a poem than Shelley seems to think. He must have art as well as inspiration.

Thus Fancy supplies the "drapery" of a poem, *i.e.*, the decorative and external elements, which are pleasing but no part of the life of the poem, (like the fringes on a lady's garment). Imagination supplies "the soul which is everywhere and in each part, and forms all into one uniform and gracefull whole." The *meaning*—the generic idea and feeling which evolves all the parts—pervades all the parts and makes them to be one living whole.

The difference is well seen in such poems as Shelley's *Cloud* and *Skylark*. The former gives

pleasure by making a stream of brilliantly-coloured pictures pass before the mind's eye; but they convey no deep meaning, and are only mental play. The latter gives pleasure also, but it is by expressing, in a series of vivid pictures, the deep meaning and feeling of the poet, in such a way that others cannot but think and feel in the same way as the poet does. Wordsworth's *Poems of Fancy* and *Poems of Imagination* differ in the same way.

Poetry and Rhetoric.

The word rhetoric means literally the art of the public speaker,—an art which formed an important part of education in later Greek and Roman times. In modern times it acquired for a time a wider meaning, and covered all instruction bearing on the art of literary composition in prose and verse; and every notable university included a chair of rhetoric.

But latterly it has acquired a narrower meaning. It has come to connote those elements of composition in prose and verse which do not contribute anything substantial to the subject treated, but are rather unnecessary additions introduced with a view to amuse, excite, or persuade the hearer or reader, without giving him further information.

Thus a speaker or writer may not be satisfied with a simple statement, however full

and harmonious. He may think to deepen the impression by adding details which interest and excite the feelings of his hearers though without adding anything to their knowledge of the subject. Such additions for impressing, astonishing or merely amusing, may be called rhetoric. Thus—

1. In controversy such additions, by exaggeration, and giving an appearance of importance to what is unimportant or irrelevant, may have the effect of deceiving or misleading hearers and sometimes of making the worse appear the better reason. In poetry a great profusion of flowing words, figures and allusions, may produce an appearance of poetry, though without any real thought or genuine feeling underlying it.

It is for these objectionable peculiarities of style that the word rhetoric is now most frequently applied.

2. But De Quincey has extended the word to include a less objectionable artifice of style. A poem or prose passage may be so overloaded with thought that, even when expressed in poetic imagery (Imagination), it becomes heavy and oppressive reading. In such a case, the author may be excused if he call in the aid of Fancy to help Imagination, and introduce ideas, images, descriptions, allusions, which are not necessary to the fundamental thought and purpose of the poem, but which, by their novelty

and variety, give relaxation to the reader's mind and stimulate him to further thought.

Such additions may be objected to by criticism of the rigidly Aristotelian type, as superfluous ornaments distracting thought from the real substance of the poem. Yet there are few great poets without a considerable play of Fancy to relieve the severity of thought (this is well seen in the similes of Homer and Milton, which derive much of their interest from the additional details worked into the actual similitude). And some critics (*e.g.*, Hazlitt, Jeffrey, Hunt, De Quincey) seem to find much of the charm of poetry in the play of Fancy combined with the deeper work of Imagination.

De Quincey includes this use of Fancy to help thought, among the meanings of rhetoric, and refers to Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne as great masters of rhetoric. But the passages which he cites from Browne, seem to be more than mere flourishes of ornament—mere *bravuras* of rhetoric—and rather to deepen the thought and feeling which it is the purpose of the author to express, and to be therefore Imagination and true poetry, rather than rhetoric of Fancy. And much of De Quincey's own most impressive work belongs to the border region between rhetoric and poetry.

PART III.

Shelley's Theory of Poetry.

Occasion of Shelley's Treatise.

In 1820 Thomas Love Peacock wrote a treatise called *The Four Ages of Poetry* in which he attempted (or pretended) to show that poetry had meaning and value only in primitive, barbarous and superstitious times, that as civilisation advanced poetry had by successive stages declined, and is in modern times ceasing to have any meaning or utility, and must give way to more useful pursuits, and die out soon.

Thus it originated and flourished in barbarous times when the chief interest of life lay in the struggles of rival tribes, exploits of chiefs, and daring adventures of heroes; and when supernatural beings such as gods and goddesses, with both supernatural and human attributes, were supposed to join in the struggles of men and make them still more wonderful and interesting. It was in such times that poetry originated,—probably in the form of ballads, describing and glorifying the achievements of tribes and chiefs. Such ballads sometimes grew together into continuous narratives, and gave rise to such works as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and other Greek

epics of the different cycles, and to the Teutonic epics of the *Nibelungs*, *Gudrun*, etc., and the less fully elaborated epics of the Celtic races.

But these ages of racial struggles, with their heroes and adventures, gradually gave way to organised institutions, civilisation and peace. Then science undermined belief in magical and supernatural wonders. Industry and commerce now took the place of tribal struggles and conquests. Thus as civilisation advanced there ceased to be any materials or much demand for poetry. It sank more and more into feeble repetitions and imitations of older works, without sincerity, and received with only artificial and affected interest. This decay was now reaching a climax. Poetry was ceasing to be of real use, or to command any genuine interest.

The busy industrial life of modern times leaves no leisure for such unproductive pursuits.

Shelley took this treatise more in earnest than its author perhaps intended, and wrote his *Defence*,—exhibiting what he believed to be the real nature and use of poetry, and showing that such arguments are founded on a misunderstanding of the meaning of poetry. Yet much the same thing was said soon afterwards by other writers. Hazlitt said: "Science clips the wings of imagination." Macaulay wrote: "We think that as civilisation advances, poetry almost necessarily declines. In proportion as men

know more and think more, they make better theories but worse poems." But Wordsworth had foreseen and answered such objections long before, in his *Preface*. Such opinions, however, served to confirm Wordsworth's theory that a new kind of poetry was needed.

The Faculty of Poetry.

We must begin the exposition by contrasting *Imagination* as the faculty of Poetry with Reason (meaning understanding) as the faculty of Science. *Reason* is the power by which we take concrete things to pieces, find the forces working in them and the uniformities (laws) according to which they work, and express them in general propositions, thereby reducing the concrete world to a system of abstract laws. Thus science proceeds from the concrete to the abstract. Imagination proceeds in the opposite direction, *viz.*, from the abstract and general to the concrete—beginning with ideas and feelings more or less vague and abstract, and making them substantial and permanent by embodying them in concrete imagery. Thus the truths at which science arrives can be comprehended only by effort of abstraction, as in mathematical formulæ. Imagination reduces the truths which it reveals to images in which they are *seen* by the mind's eye, as in pictures.

The working of imaginative power is seen best in poetry. It lays hold of some truth, in itself general and abstract, and enters into it like a life-force, and expands it into a system of related ideas, and makes them all co-operate as organs towards the fuller expression of the fundamental idea, and makes the system of ideas thus evolved to be, as it were, one concrete living whole—a poem.

Thus while the methods of science correspond to the disintegrating forces of nature (it "murders to dissect"), imagination corresponds to the integrating, evolving, life-giving force. It is the constructive power of nature reproducing itself in the finite mind.

This, then, is the reason why Shelley says, "Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be 'the expression of the imagination,'" and this effort to give concrete embodiment to ideas and feelings may fairly be said to be "connate with the origin of man."

The Motive Force: the Ideal—to improve on nature.

And this impulse towards expression and construction must have a motive. There is possible always "a certain order and rhythm" which "will give an intenser and purer pleasure than any other." A continual striving to improve

upon the present, and to picture in the mind beforehand some combination which would be more satisfactory than what is actually presented by experience. And this feeling of the possibility of something better and higher—this 'ideal,' however vaguely conceived it may be —supplies the impulse underlying all the working of imagination, which is, indeed, an unceasing effort to see and find expression for something higher and better.

Thus from the beginning human beings have been receiving sense-impressions from the external world, retaining and reviving them in the form of ideas, and rising from the form given by nature, to some more ideal form.

Imagination applied to improve on nature.

Hence, when agreeable, they have had an instinctive tendency not only to reproduce them, but to improve upon them. The child hears the bird singing and at once tries to sing like the bird ; sees the lamb dancing, and at once begins to imitate the lamb; but tries to sing and dance better than bird or lamb. Animals imitate one another but never go beyond imitation. Here the difference between rational and animal mind comes in. Rational beings cannot stop with merely imitating. They have an instinctive feeling that they can improve upon

nature. They combine the ideas of what they have experienced into new combinations, and thereby form conceptions of what will be better than nature. And they strive to impose their conceptions on nature by giving them permanent objective existence. They may embody their conceptions in matter and produce tools, houses, clothing, boats, roads and works of art. They may substantialise them in uniformities of procedure and produce customs, laws, governments, religions. Or they may give them permanence as systems of ideas expressed in words, and produce literature.

Thus all human constructions have their beginning in thought, and are at first constructions of imagination, *i.e.*, ideas. Then they give expression and concrete embodiment to ideas, and thereby introduce something new and better into the world of nature. Therefore inventors, legislators, builders and artists, religious reformers and makers of new institutions, are all 'makers,' *i.e.*, poets in the wider sense of the word. They think and feel, and transform their thoughts into concrete realities.

The wind blows on the Æolian harp, and makes its strings vibrate and produces musical sounds, but the harp does not hear, nor remember, nor do anything to improve upon its own vibration. The same vibrations communicated to the human ear produce corresponding

vibrations there, but there is this difference; the human subject feels them as sensations, and preserves them as ideas, and sees the possibility of improving upon them by modifying the causes from which they spring; and sets imagination to work to construct ideas of musical instruments which will produce better music than the wind and the harp. Thus the sights and sounds of nature excite the mind to imitation; imitation excites it to improvement, and improvement leads to art—social, industrial, aesthetic.

Thus the materials for the constructions of imagination are supplied by the forces of nature acting from without, but the impulse to its constructions is the striving to improve on nature and impose on nature, ideas evolved from within itself, which are ideas of what is higher than nature itself. But the first step in its work is imitation—man must imitate before he can surpass, and all the creative works of men begin in imitation, as music and dancing begin in imitation of the sounds and movements of nature.

Imitation in Poetry.

Hence many have assumed (following what has been supposed to have been the opinion of Aristotle) that all art, poetry included, is essentially imitation,—a copying merely of what is seen

in nature and life. So that the excellence of the picture and statue, the poem, play and novel, consists in its being an accurate transcript of what is actually experienced in life. This principle is carried out, no doubt, in extreme forms of *realistic* art (in realistic poetry, painting, novel-writing, etc.),—for there have always been periods of re-action against "romantic" extravagance,—back to literal reality (*e.g.* the novels of Jane Austen).

But imitation is only the beginning and the lowest form of art. In "the youth of the world men dance and sing, and imitate natural objects" but they do more than this. The impulse which comes from nature, is not to imitate nature merely, but to improve upon nature. Nature itself is always striving towards something higher than itself, and finds its outlet and channel in the rational mind—which nature makes to be the medium through which nature produces something higher than itself. Therefore, when primitive men danced and sang in imitation of the motions and sounds of nature, there was in their minds at the same time the feeling that there was "a certain rhythm and order" of movements and sounds which would produce an intenser and purer pleasure than those of nature; and in course of time the feeling deepened into the conviction that there are standards of good which are not to be found in nature

or life, but which have "an eternal right" to be, and are seen by the legislator, the inventor, the founder of religions and the poet. Therefore, beginning perhaps with primitive dancing and singing, art has risen beyond mere imitation of nature and has striven, not indeed to add any new law or force to nature, but to draw out what is in nature, and make nature surpass itself, and thus to be the agent of nature, not its rival.

Thus legislators, inventors and authors of new industrial systems are not satisfied with imitating nature, but try to make nature produce something higher. They all begin with a feeling of need for something beyond what imitation can give, an effort of Imagination to attain a concrete picture of a better something, and this is followed by the work of realisation. So it must be with the artist and poet. The imitation theory with the literal realism to which it leads, does not give a satisfactory account of poetry and art.

Poetry in the Narrower Sense.

To evolve such ideals in thought and guide men to their realisation, is the work of Imagination. Hence inventors, artists, legislators, founders of states and religions, work through imagination, and are therefore poets (makers) in the widest sense of that word. But we must

"circumscribe the word poetry within the limits of that 'art' which is the most familiar and perfect application of the faculty." This is the 'art' which consists in the substantialising of thought and feeling (not in material things as machinery, buildings and the like, but) in ideas and language, realising the beauty which is to be attained in constructions wholly mental, which is poetry. And poetry with thought, feeling and language as its materials can achieve constructions which in complexity and refinement, go much beyond what can be accomplished in physical materials.

The Materials of Poetry.

We have to consider, then, the materials of poetry in this sense. Thus every art and industry is distinguished by the materials in which the constructive imagination peculiar to it operates—in colours and forms, in wood and stone and metals. The materials of poetical imagination (in the narrowest sense) are ideas with the feelings rising out of them, and language which becomes so closely associated with and so essential to thought that idea and word become almost identical (M. Muller).

The poet therefore will be one who can see truths and ideas in nature and life which others cannot see, and reduce them to concrete ideas,

and then to language, and can combine many ideas together into one organic whole, in which they are co-ordinated together with that harmony of relations which produces the feeling of the beautiful.

The Beautiful in Poetry.

We may repeat, then, that the condition of beauty in a poem is that it be a revelation of a certain kind of truth by means of ideas and words, so harmonized together as to give full expression to the fundamental truth. But a question still remains : in which of the above constituents of a poem does its beauty really lie.

Thus it may be said (*a*) that the beauty of a poem consists just in the harmony and completeness of the expression which it gives to its thought and feeling—*i.e.*, the Art with which its ideas and words are co-ordinated into one harmonious whole of thought and language. It is a revelation of truth but its beauty consists mainly in the art of the revelation, not in the nature of the truth revealed.

Or (*b*) that the beauty of the revelation may have something to do with the nature of truth revealed. It may be thought that the poem is beautiful only when it satisfies the aspiration of the mind towards new and deeper thought and towards thought and feeling which will rise above

the mere impression made by nature and will thereby tend to refine and elevate humanity.

The life of nature tends upwards towards something higher than nature itself, and therefore no thoughts or feelings can enter into the beautiful which are not elevating and ennobling, in line with the tendency of nature itself. The latter is the view of Wordsworth; the former—that beauty is good for its own sake and not for any ulterior purpose—is held by Croce, the principal writer on aesthetics in recent times.

Poetry as old as Creation.

Thus poetry is connate with intelligence and developed along with it. From the youth of the world onwards men have been seeing truths in nature and life, and feeling the feeings that rise out of them. But truths and feelings are vague and abstract, and difficult to preserve and and communicate. Therefore the effort to see truths has always been accompanied by the correlative effort to embody and preserve them by giving them concrete forms in which they would be preserved and understood (this effort is seen in the paintings and carvings left by the most primitive peoples on rocks and the walls of caves). But music and dancing, painting, and sculpture were limited in their range of expression. Therefore from the beginning of

intelligence, the attempt to 'substantialise' and preserve thought and feeling took mainly the form of embodying them in *pictorial ideas* and expressing these in language; and thought and feelings thus expressed is poetry. Thus poetry became the most universal way of expressing thought and feeling and satisfying the desire for improving on nature, and for what is beautiful.

Therefore it may fairly be said that poetry is connate with intelligence; as soon as men began to think, their imaginative power began to seek means of preserving and communicating thought, and that, in forms of pictorial imagery in which it could be *seen* and comprehended by all; and such constructions of imagination were poetry. Therefore—

Poetry is not all Fancy.

It follows that poetry is something very different from what was assumed by Peacock and other critics. Its purpose was not to satisfy the combative instincts of men by commemorating the achievements of warriors and conquerors, nor to amuse them by playing with the ideas of gods, fairies and wizards as they had supposed (which is only poetry of fancy).* It was a way of seeing, feeling and expressing the deepest truths of nature and life,

satisfying thereby the deepest needs of human nature, and deeply affecting human life. It was as Wordsworth had said, "the first and last of all knowledge, and as immortal as the heart of man." "A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth." It presents life in concrete imagery, and presents not "what is partial and accidental and possible only at a particular time and in a particular combination of events," but what is true of human nature universally, or rises out of it as natural consequence. This is why Aristotle said that poetry is the most 'philosophical' of all the arts.

A poem is therefore different from a 'story or history.' A story is a catalogue of detached facts which, to the reader, have no other connection than time, place and accidental circumstances. A poem is founded on some germinal truth present in idea, such that this one idea gives rise to another idea and all these ideas co-operate with one another to form one organic whole, in accordance with the laws of development and life working in nature and inherent eternally in the mind of God; and in this complex result the fundamental idea with its feeling find their expression. It is in the working of this life-force which works in all things, that interest and beauty lie. History, giving the series of facts but missing the inner life which gives connection to them, "observes and

distorts what should be beautiful"; poetry restores the beauty of what has been distorted, bringing to light again the inner life which has been obscured. (The same may be said of some prose romances, as those of Scott.)

Poetry in Language: Metaphor.

The universality of poetic imagination is seen in the origin of language itself. The number of original roots in a language (words not derived from other words) is comparatively small. They are commonly supposed to have been words standing for concrete things—the stone, tree, river, hill. But thought soon extended to relations between things, and thereby to general and abstract ideas. As this development of thought proceeded, there was difficulty in finding new words to express these almost new ideas. This was accomplished not by inventing new words, but by making the old words, or combinations of them, serve the purpose. This was done by metaphor. Thus we find that all our compound words standing for general and abstract ideas, involve metaphor (the 'carrying over' of a word from its original thing to include another thing having something in common with it). Thus when a general or abstract idea was found to contain within it some quality found also in

a particular concrete thing, the word for that thing might be extended in meaning to include also the general idea. Thus practically all our abstract terms have concrete things behind them, and to understand the abstract fully we have to revive the concrete in which we can see it pictured. Coleridge says, "in order to get the full sense of a word we should first present to ourselves the visual image that forms its primary meaning" (that is, if we still know what it was, for many words are only "faded metaphors," the original concrete thing being often forgotten).

Thus the word *abstraction* here used, meant originally the physical process of pulling things asunder—drawing one part away from another. But it has been 'carried over' to include the mental process of drawing out from one idea another idea which, though different, has still something in common with the original, and may therefore be expressed by the same word. *Derive* meant to draw aside some of the water of a stream (*rivus*) and make it flow in another direction. This has been extended to the drawing out of one idea or truth from another. *Consider* is believed to have meant originally to notice the relative positions (*con*) of the stars (*sidera*) and foretell the consequence. *Origin* means a rising up, as the sun rises. *Conclude*, to close together in one place as sheep in a fold. *Express* means to squeeze out the

juice of fruit. *Complicate* was suggested by many strands of thread entangled together. Such words therefore are metaphors. Their original meaning is drawn out of them and extended to things of a very different kind,—often from physical to mental.

Thus most words were originally metaphors. In most cases, perhaps, we have forgotten the original meaning so that they have ceased to be metaphors to us; they are often "*faded* metaphors." But the men who originally made the words, understood the metaphors contained in them. When they used the word, they saw the original thing for which the word stood, and, reflected or embodied in this thing, they saw the secondary meaning. When they heard the words *derive, consider, origin, express,* they saw in their mind's eye the divided stream, the group of stars, the rising sun, etc., and these made the abstract thoughts at once to rise in their minds, with clear understanding of their meaning.

Thus "the language of primitive men was vitally metaphorical." But this expression of thought in concrete imagery is the work of imagination, and is therefore poetry. "In the infancy of society language is itself poetry." Every word is a little image expressing a thought. "Every language near to its source is the chaos of a cyclic poem," every word being a little poem by itself; and many such words

might be connected together in such a way as to build up a larger poem; as the many scattered ballads of ancient Greece were connected together by the rhapsodes (Homer, etc.) and made into the epic poems of the Trojan, Theban Argive and other cycles of Greek legend.

Shelley is here thinking of the theory of Christian Wolff regarding the origin of the Homeric and other epics, which was the view most in keeping with tendencies of the new romantic school of poetry in Germany and England. That school preferred to think of literature as the spontaneous and natural expression of the thought and feelings of a people without deliberate art.

Hence the error of those who argue that poetry belongs to a particular phase of human history, and no other. It is founded in human nature, and is manifested even in the development of language.

Poetry and Music; Metre.

Thus all human constructions—industrial, political, religious and artistic as well as literary—are embodiments of ideas, developed within the mind by power of imagination; and are therefore poetry in the widest sense of the word; and the architect, the inventor, and the legislator are all poets. But we commonly restrict the word poetry to constructions built of ideas, which are valued not for practical purposes but for the

sake of the thought and feeling which they substantialise and perpetuate in language, and which have permanent influence on human life.

With regard to the language of poetry no general principle need be laid down beyond this; that it should be such as will express most clearly and fully the thought and feeling which is the soul of the poem. But words do not give adequate expression to feeling without music. Therefore the genuine poet, in drawing out his thought and feeling in words, will draw out the music which is in words, *viz.*, by rhythm and metre, and the rhythm of the language will be in harmony with the thought and feeling of the poem, so that the thought and sound will be one harmonious whole. The music of the verse deepens the feeling expressed, and the different kinds of verse will be such as to harmonise with and deepen the different kinds of feeling. Hence the different kinds of metre and verse used by the poet will not be wholly at random but be suited to the feeling expressed by the poem; and in this art Shelley himself is one of the greatest masters. (See p. 81 and Part VII.)

Spontaneity of True Poetry.

But in the development of this harmonious whole there is nothing really artificial. The thought and feeling of the poet finds for itself

the language required to express it, and gives to the language the motion and rhythm which is in keeping with itself. Indeed, the thought, the words and the symphony are not things at first separate and then put together. They are all three correlative to one another, and grow together as factors of one life in the poet's mind. The poet's thoughts "voluntary move harmonious numbers."

Poetry cannot be made.

It follows that a poem cannot be *made* ; it must grow. A true poem has its germ in some truth of life, and branches out by a natural development in the poet's mind (as the plant grows from its germ in the soil, one part out of another—trunk, branches, leaves and flower), and when complete, is like a living organism in which every part has life (*i.e.*, meaning) in itself and at the same time contributes to the common life of the whole.

" Poetry is not like reasoning, a thing which can be asserted according to determination of the wlll. A man cannot say, ' I will compose a poem.' The power rises from within like the colour of the flower." It is an error to assert that the finest passages of poetry have been produced by labour and study. Milton felt as if the heavenly muse "dictated" to him his

"unpremeditated song." It comes as "the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own." (See Coleridge above). It may be true, however, that no great poet has succeeded in substantialising fully in language the visions that came to him in thought—"the glory and the dream"; what we have in writing may be far inferior to what was in the poet's mind.

It comes over his mind "as the wind over the sea," and the traces which it leaves in the mind are imperfect as those which the waves leave on the sandy beach.

The Great Epic Poems.

The greatest of all poetic forms, doubtless, is the epic which contains within it all the other forms. The great epic poet is one whose "creative" power gives expression to the "knowledge, sentiments and religion,"—the manners, thoughts, beliefs and aspirations—of his own nation and time. If the nation and period are not his own, the expression will not be at firsthand and therefore genuine, spontaneous and sincere—it will be more or less artificial. Judged by this standard there will be but three epic poets of the first class—Homer who expressed spontaneously and sincerely the mind and life of Greece, B.C. 1000—Dante who expressed with intensity and conviction, the mind of catholic

Italy in the middle age—and Milton who did the same for protestant England in the reformation period. Virgil and Tasso cannot be included, because they dealt with other times than their own, so that their creations did not rise in their minds spontaneously, but were built up artificially out of materials acquired by learning, and in which they did not really believe. Their work is fancy more than imagination. Shelley is here following the judgment of the German Romantic School (Schlegel, etc.).

Poetry and Utility.

W. L. Peacock had asked triumphantly "what is the use of poetry?" as if no answer could be given to the question. How could the unreal constructions of poetical imagination stand beside the practical discoveries of science and the creations of industry? Producers must be valued according to the utility of their productions. Therefore "poets had been challenged to resign the civic crown to calculators and mechanists"—poetry being so much inferior in utility to these.

But what is this utility of their's? What is really useful? Everything is useful which supplies some need of human nature. These needs are of two kinds; (*a*) needs of the physical life manifested in the states of the bodily organism,

These needs are real and men who contribute to their supply are benefactors of humanity, and this is what is aimed at in scientific inquiry and industrial arts. The critics of poetry are thinking only of these—to them, those things alone are really useful which contribute to the supply of food, clothing and shelter.

(*b*) But there is another class of needs to which physical needs are themselves contributory. The body exists for the sake of the mind—the physical needs therefore are subordinate to mental needs, and whatever supplies the needs of the mind will be useful even in a higher sense than those which supply the subordinate bodily needs.

Does poetry, then, contribute in any way to the needs of the mind ? If so, it will be useful in the highest degree. Now the life of the mind consists in thinking. Thinking extends, to be sure, over the needs of the physical life which supports the mind. But thought rises above the needs of the physical life, and seeks satisfaction in a world of its own. This can be understood in this way. The rational mind finds that the world of its experience does not satisfy all the faculties, and aspirations inherent in its nature, and has therefore a natural longing to see through the veil presented by outward appearances, and penetrate to the deeper realities of nature and life, and from these to rise in

thought to things higher and more perfect or nearer to what should be—to the ideal which is in all things.

This "divine discontent" is not a mere fancy but an essential element of reason present from the beginning of rational life, and has been the dynamic force of all progress—of civilisation, industry and science themselves. And poetry meets this need of the mind in a more direct, and more universally intelligible way than science, and is therefore not a passing fancy but coeval with humanmind (pp. 89-92).

For the function of poetry is to help men to see and feel their position in this actual world and to use this knowledge of what is, to form clearer conceptions of what might and should be, and thereby stimulate to a life of action for the advancement of humanity. This enlightening and stimulating influence makes poetry to be 'useful' in the highest degree, and to be a powerful force in the development of mind.

Hence it is in the most active periods of the world's life that poetry pours itself forth most spontaneously and abundantly. It is not so much the poets themselves speaking, but rather the spirit of their age speaking through them, and that, even where they themselves do not fully understand its revelations. The poet, like the prophet, may be wiser than he knows. "They are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration," and in their minds as in mirrors are reflected the innermost workings of the life of nature.

PART IV

Coleridge on Poetry and Criticism.

His criticism of recent poetry.

Coleridge was of the same mind as Wordsworth regarding the decline of English poetry in the later 18th century. It had lost originality and variety. It had come to consist largely of figures, phrases and allusions repeated from classical times ; of common ideas such as might occur to any one, but made to have the appearance of poetry by being expressed in language such as could not be used in common life—trusting to pompous circumlocutions, and conformity with rules, and imitation of models from former times. It was composed largely of prose thought put into what was supposed to be the language of poetry. It was largely what Wordsworth had called "poetic diction," or diction invented mainly for the purpose of disguising poverty of thought and making prose appear to be poetry.

He agreed with Wordsworth also in protesting against the criticism of the time—its denunciation of all attempt to depart from the forms and style then accepted, and to introduce originality and variety. This made him see the need of a systematic inquiry into the real nature

and purpose of poetry, and of principles derived therefrom which would help critics and readers to judge fairly and correctly what is good and not good in poetry. Therefore he wrote his *Biographia Literaria* (1817). In that book he had intended to reply to the criticisms that had been passed on his own writings; to make a systematic inquiry into the real nature of poetry, and deduce canons of criticism for the correct judgment of poetry. But he left the work in an unfinished and fragmentary form. After a sketch of his own training at school, and some preliminary chapters leading on to the question of the nature of poetry, he leaves off with a summary of his own and Wordsworth's distinction between Fancy and Imagination. He then turns aside to "settle" the controversy which Wordsworth's *Preface* had given rise to, regarding the language of poetry, and ends with a lengthy estimate of Wordsworth's poetry in general. From what he has written we can see that he agrees in all essentials with Wordsworth—in spite of some difference as to the language of poetry. The work though unsystematic contains more profound intuitions and suggestions with regard to poetry and criticism of poetry than any other book. Indeed Coleridge may be considered the founder of reasoned criticism in English.

The subject of Fancy and Imagination has already been dealt with on the lines of

Wordsworth and Coleridge together. The principles of criticism contained or implied in Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley will be treated in another section (Part VIII). It remains here to consider the controversy as to the language of poetry—poetic diction—rising originally out of Wordsworth's *Preface* of 1800.

The "Lyrical Ballads" again: origin of controversy on the language of Poetry.

Wordsworth and Coleridge lived for great part of the year 1797-98 in each other's company. Coleridge had already written two volumes of poems. These poems contained some fine lines and verses, but consisted largely of common thought expressed in the conventional and grandiose diction of the time. Wordsworth also had written some poems, and even these were not altogether free from the faults of the time. But both had now come to see the weakness of this style, and to see that, in consequence of it, English poetry had fallen into a state of decline, and that a new beginning was needed. They resolved to attempt such a beginning by writing together a small volume of poems on new subjects, and in a new style. Coleridge was to take supernatural incidents, and treat them in such a way as to make them appear to be natural. Such subjects had been introduced into literature some years before, in prose tales and in ballads, by what some have called the school of "terror,"

but they had written merely to produce sensation, and their tales had no meaning in them. Coleridge was to put meaning into his supernatural stories, and, at the same time, by picturesque description and familiar language, was to produce the illusion of reality. Wordsworth was to take subjects from common life and treat them as far as possible in the language of common life, and to show that even common things when fully understood will be found to contain meanings and suggestions sufficient to raise a feeling of the presence of supernatural powers working in the natural. In short, Coleridge was to make the supernatural seem natural, and Wordsworth was to make the natural seem supernatural—thus showing the interpenetration of the two in human experience (which is the essence of romanticism).

Thus Wordsworth was the first to make *explicit* in English thought the feeling of the transcendental— *i.e.*, that behind (above, transcending) the outward appearances which things present to the senses, there are deeper powers at work which reveal themselves to us in these appearances—a supernatural which is not outside but *in* the natural—

> "A motion and a spirit which impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things;"

and this enables him to find deep meanings even in common things. This spiritualizing of nature

continued to be the "burden" of all his best poetry and thus—

"Prophet he was to us all
Of the beauty and bloom of the world;"

but to him its "beauty and bloom" did not consist (as to Keats at first) in its giving pleasant sensations, but in revealing deep meanings—the presence of "something far more deeply interfused." He saw all things surrounded with "a halo.

A light that never was on sea or land."

Innovations by Wordsworth.

The book contained some twenty poems of which only one was of considerable length, *viz.*, the *Ancient Mariner*. Wordsworth's contribution amounted to seventeen or eighteen pieces, but mostly short, the most considerable being *Tintern Abbey*. A number of these deal with subjects taken from "humble and rustic" life. A few are dramatic in form, making humble people speak for themselves. Some may be called semi-dramatic, the poet himself speaking, but speaking as one of the people with whom he is dealing. Hence these poems on humble life are written in language as near as possible to that of the people themselves. But some have nothing to do with humble life, and in these, the poet speaks in his own person and uses the language natural to himself (*e.g.*, *Tintern Abbey*, *Lines*

Written in Early Spring), and it is in these that the power of his contribution mainly lies,—introducing, as they do, a new vein of thought and feeling into English poetry. Both kinds exposed him to criticism.

Thus in dealing dramatically with rural life, he makes his rustic people speak like themselves —following as far as possible the style and the ways of thinking characteristic of the people. Being a poet he has to put into their mouths, sometimes, poetical ideas which would hardly have occurred to the persons themselves; but he takes care to use such language as they themselves might have used, avoiding altogether the artificial "poetic diction"—the peculiar words, and phrases, allusions, personifications and grandiose generalities, then thought essential to poetry.

But the critics of the day, who had come to think that the diction which had become predominant during the century was an essential element of poetry and that poetry was impossible without it, criticised his work very severely. They said that both his subjects and his language were beneath the dignity of poetry. Some of his poems were childish, and the rest were unintelligible. Hence,

Wordsworth's defence.

He replied to them in the *Preface* of 1800. In this preface he (*a*) explains and justifies his

choice of subjects and language in the *Lyrical Ballads*; and (*b*) justifies himself further by sketching his theory of the nature of poetry and its relation to science, and deduces, from the nature of poetry, the kind of language which should be used in poetry generally. We have therefore to distinguish between (*a*) what he says regarding the subjects, language and style of the few poems on rustic life contained in the *Ballads*, and (*b*) what he says regarding those of poetry in general. Coleridge and many others have overlooked this distinction; and have represented him as teaching that subjects taken from "humble and rustic" life (as by himself in a few of the *Ballads*) and the rustic language put dramatically into the mouths of these rustic people in these particular poems, should be *the subjects and language of all poetry*. And when, in other poems, he takes up different subjects, and speaks, not dramatically, but in his own person, expressing his own thought in the language *natural to himself* and not exactly identical with that used by rustic people (*e.g.*, in *Tintern Abbey*), they accuse him of contradicting thereby his own teaching. In other words, because Wordsworth, in speaking dramatically through the mouths of country people, uses approximately the style of country people, he thereby pledged himself, they say, to use that style universally (even when speaking his own thought in his own person)

and taught that all other poets should do the same.

What he really did say about the language of poetry.

But what he really did teach was (*a*) *negatively*: that poetry should avoid the "gaudy and inane phraseology" and artificial diction by which so many poets had sought to conceal poverty of thought and to make commonplace ideas to be accepted as poetry; and (*b*) *positively*: that poetry consists not in the use of high-sounding words and phrases, but in the expression of thought and feeling, and that the best expression of poetical thought and feeling is such language "as is really *used* by men," and that "there neither is nor can (should) be any essential difference between the language of poetry and that of prose when well written." He argues that a poet is but a man like other men, and that his thoughts and feelings are just like those of other men, and can therefore be adequately expressed in such language as is used by men, and need no artificial language to express them; and that a true poet requires no artifices of diction to give his work a false appearance of being poetry.

Further, as Wordsworth holds that there should be no essential difference between

the language used in poetry and that used in prose, they virtually accuse him of holding that there should be no difference between poetry itself and prose itself—overlooking Wordsworth's fundamental principle, that poetry consists not in the sort of words and phrases used but in the thought expressed; and that it is in respect of these, that poetry differs from prose, and not in the class of words used.

What Wordsworth protested against.

In this teaching Wordsworth was moved by what he saw to be the unreality of much that passed for poetry. He believed that the real poet is one who sees what other men cannot see, and that his thought about what he sees is deeper and wider than that of others. But in much of what then passed for poetry, the thought was superficial and ordinary, or gathered laboriously from older writers; and the feeling was superficial or pretended. And yet such ordinary and second-hand material was made to seem new and different from ordinary, by being expressed in a peculiar kind of language. Common objects were represented by uncommon words and phrases. Ordinary facts were made to seem different from ordinary by being expressed in high-sounding periphrases. Particular events, unimportant in themselves,

were made to seem important by being expressed in pompous generalisations.

In this way the commonness of the thought was concealed; and an appearance of depth, originality and dignity was attained by periphrastic and exaggerated language. Poverty of thought was compensated for by "splendour of diction." It was against this style that Wordsworth protested.

What Wordsworth had shown in the "Lyrical Ballads."

Against this Wordsworth in his *Lyrical Ballads* had endeavoured to show that poetry *could* be expressed in language differing but little from that of real life, and poetry might excite interest not by the use of uncommon language, but by the force of the thought and feeling expressed. (1) In some of these poems he sought to show that there is poetry in the lives even of humble rustic people, and that it could be expressed in language *really used* by the people themselves, without having recourse to the turgid diction of the other poets of the time. (2) In others, he sought to show that poetry of deep thought and feeling could be written in such language as was *really used* by himself and other people of the same class (*Tintern Abbey*, etc.); and that such poetry

could gain nothing by being expressed in artificial poetic diction or such language as was *really used* by nobody in real life.

And the general theory taught in the *Preface* is that all poets should (like himself in this respect) trust to the originality and depth of what they had to say, and not to the use of uncommon language. This he considered to be simply literary honesty, avoiding 'clap-trap.'

Yet a long poem cannot all be poetry.

Yet there may be some inducement or temptation at times, even for good poets, to use language of that kind. In long poems (as Coleridge himself remarked) there must be many passages which afford no opportunity for poetic thought or feeling, *e.g.*, passages of transition or explanation. How are these to be composed? Two ways are possible, (*i*) they may be expressed in language natural to the substance of the passages, that is, in simple though rhythmical prose; or (*ii*) the poet may conceal their prosaic character by expressing them in grandiose "poetic diction." Wordsworth adopts the former method (compare similar prosaic passages in Milton and Shakespeare). Hence so many passages in his poetry are criticised as flat and prosaic. They really are such, and Wordsworth meant them to be such, and

regarded such literary "honesty" as a prime duty of the poet.

Coleridge complains that blame due to Wordsworth had fallen on him. (Biog. Lit. III).

Now Coleridge had been Wordsworsh's partner in the composition of the book which had raised so much controversy. His poems in that collection, written under the influence of Wordsworth, were free from the turgid diction of his earlier poetry. Long before the composition of his *Biographia Literaria* (1817) he had been the neighbour and frequent companion of Wordsworth in the Lake district. Therefore he had come to be closely associated in the minds of the public with Wordsworth (and also with his other neighbour Southey) as a member of the "Lake School," and thought to be at one in all essentials of opinion with Wordsworth. Nevertheless in his *Biographia* he protests against this opinion, and expresses surprise that such a mistake should ever have been made. For 17 years he had been the object of depreciation and adverse criticism amounting almost to personal abuse. He had long been unable to understand the reason of this; he was not aware of having done anything to deserve it. But at last he had come to see that it must be owing to his supposed connection with Wordsworth and Southey. He had stood so near to them that much of the

cold water thrown on them had fallen on him also. And yet Southey could not be the cause of this persistent ill-will. Like himself Southey had done nothing to deserve it, his works were all admirable, and above satirical criticism.

Therefore Wordsworth with his preface must be the cause of this undeserved depreciation which had fallen on both Southey and himself. It was undeserved, because, as he now tells us, he had never agreed at all with Wordsworth's theory of poetic language which had drawn down such a storm of denunciation. (*Biog. Lit.* Ch. III). He now (1817)

Repudiates Wordsworth's theory of poetic language. (*Biog. Lit. XVII*).

This was surprising, and it seemed ungenerous to lay the blame of his own unpopularity on one to whom he owed so much." And indeed he seems in various points inconsistent with himself. He had co-operated with Wordsworth in the production of the *Ballads.* He had expressed admiration for Wordsworth's poetry, and general agreement with his theory of poetry and its methods; he had often expressed dissatisfaction with the literary style of the time, and had done it in language even stronger than Wordsworth's. His best poetry was during, or subsequent to, his intercourse with Wordsworth in 1797, and clearly under his influence.

But on the other hand, his earlier poems (*Religious Musings* and *Sibylline Leaves*) had been written to no small extent in the turgid rhetorical diction of the time and have been described accordingly as "intolerable platitude expressed in more intolerable bombast." He had come to appreciate (he admits) and to emulate the plainer style of Wordsworth; but it seems that (like Campbell and others) he still retained some liking for the style in which he had begun, and still believed that poetry may be improved (at least) by being expressed in flowery language different from that of prose.

Therefore, in his *Biographia* (1817), while agreeing with, and in parts re-stating and even deepening, Wordsworth's theory of poetry in general, he comes forward as an adverse critic of Wordsworth's theory of poetic language (Chapters XVII and XVIII) and appears to assume in opposition to Wordsworth that poetry consisted as much in the phraseology used as in the thought and feeling expressed, and that poetic diction is necessary to some extent (he does not show clearly to what extent) in poetry. But there is some—

Misunderstanding in his reading of Wordsworth.

But his criticism is confused not a little by his own confusing of the two purposes of Wordsworth's treatise. Wordsworth had undertaken (*a*)

to show generally that poetry can be written in such language as is *really used* by men, and therefore in language not *essentially* different from that of prose. And in illustrating this, he had shown also that the lives of common people are fit subjects for poetry as well as those of high life, and that poetry can be adequately expressed in such simple language as is *really used* by such people—bringing out what is really true of their lives without the need of ornamental diction. And with this purpose in view he had written *The Thorn*, *Goody Blake*, *The Idiot Boy*, and some others. And also (*b*) that the highest poetry can be expressed in such language as was *really used* by such persons as himself and others of the same class, without any artificial "splendour or diction," and therefore also in language, hardly different from what they would have used in serious prose; and with this in view he wrote *Tintern Abbey*, and other pieces (and no one could say that these would have been improved by being written in the style of the *Botanic Garden* or the *Pleasures of Hope* or Coleridge's own *Religious Musings*). Coleridge overlooks this distinction and makes Wordsworth teach that all poetry should be about, and in the speech of poor and rustic people.

For Wordsworth had justified the introduction of rustic people and their speech into poetry occasionally (1) by showing that the natural life

lived by these people is even more interesting than the artificial life of society; and (2) that their language, being evolved to express the great phenomena of nature, is nearer to that original concrete pictorial language of the early world, from which the abstract vocabulary of the "higher life" is derived by metaphorical transference (as Shelley shows); and (3) showing that we must ourselves revive that primitive metaphor in thought, in order to understand these abstract ideas clearly; and (4) teaches that all poetry (not dramatic) is best when written in the language which is most natural and comes most spontaneously to the writer; and therefore in language not essentially different from that of prose when well written.

Coleridge's criticism of Wordsworth. (*Ch. XVII*)

But, whatever was his reason, Coleridge turns against Wordsworth in her *Biographia*, in respect of poetic diction.

Thus he assumes that Wordsworth in justifying the style of the *Ballads*, is laying down a law for all poets, and teaching the principle that all poetry should be on rustic subjects and in the language of rustics, and thinks that he is refuting Wordsworth by showing that this is impossible. But what Wordsworth said was merely that such people are fit subjects for poetry, and their language when selected from and corrected is well suited for some kinds of poetry. (His poems of rural life may be contrasted with those of Pope on the same subject, *e.g.*, his

Pastorals and those of other 18th century poets.)

2. In dealing with Wordsworth's higher poems he assumes that they are in contravention of his own theory of poetic lauguage simply because they are not in the language of rustic people like his ballads, but in such language as only educated people would use. Indeed he seems to assume some such dogmatic line of reasoning as this :

No real poem can be composed in conformity with Wordsworth's theory of poetic language, (*i.e.*, in language really used by men). But these pieces of Wordsworth's are real poems ; therefore they cannot be in conformity with his theory of language.

But what the critic of Wordsworth has to do is to show that his language is not such as could be used by real men of any class, or used in prose of any kind. To be sure, "really used by men," and "usable in good prose" are rather wide criteria—prose itself varies from the plainness of Dryden, Addison or Southey, to the flowery style of De Quincey,—and it would be easy to show that Wordsworth very rarely violates his own principle rightly understood. Coleridge's attempts to do so can be seen to be based on a careless reading of what Wordsworth really wrote.

His misconception is best exhibited, perhaps, in the otherwise fine passage in which he refers

to certain poems in a "sustained and lofty style" which Wordsworth has introduced among his rustic *Ballads*. These lofty compositions are in direct contradiction, he thinks, of Wordsworth's theory of poetic language. But to make this out, he would have to prove that the lofty character of these poems is due to the language used, and that that language is a poetic diction essentially different from that really used by men. That would indeed be in defiance of Wordsworth's theory. But in what does the merit of the poems (*e.g.*, *Tintern Abbey*) really consist? Surely it does not rest in any conventional "splendour of diction." They are spoken in the poet's own person, and in the "common language" natural to himself and others of the same class. In some places the style is almost conversational; and nowhere does it depart from what would be permissible in serious prose. The effect of the poems springs mainly from the thought and feeling expressed, but partly just from their being expressed in simple language, not essentially different from language in common use, and commonly understood. Had it been expressed in this pompous poetic diction then fashionable, all the effect would have been lost. And there is nothing in it opposed to any theory that Wordsworth ever laid down.

3. He argues further: Wordsworth's main criterion of good poetic language is an impracticable one—"*really used by men*." There are many classes of men speaking different kinds of language; which of them does he really mean! He seems to mean only "low and rustic people"; but they are not the only real men.

But this difficulty is quite imaginary. Wordsworth (in § 21) makes it clear enough what he means. Different classes of men are all equally real. When the poet makes persons of one particular class speak (dramatically), he will make each speak like others of that class. When the poet speaks in his own person, he will speak in the language which is natural to himself and his fellows. This is what he meant by "adopting the real language of men."

4. When Wordsworth said that there should be "no *essential* difference between the language of prose and that of metrical composition," what does he mean by *essential*? Such a statement can be nothing but a truism. There cannot be any *essential* linguistic difference between compositions written in the English language. To be *essentially* different, the one would have to be written in English and the other perhaps in Chinese.

But this again is an arbitrary criticism. It is clear enough what Wordsworth meant by essential. If poetry were to be written largely in words and phrases which could not be used in normal prose, this would be an essential difference between poetry and prose. And he means to say that much poetry of his time was really of this character, and thinks that this is opposed to the nature of true poetry. The true language of poetry is that in which the

poet's ideas and feelings spontaneously clothe themselves ; and this is the language natural to the poet, and therefore much the same as that which he would use in prose.

5. Wordsworth in some of the *Ballads* introduces rural people and makes them speak (dramatically) in their own simple style, and defends himself by saying that people living the natural life of the woods and hills, are as interesting and instructive as people living the fashionable life of cities ; and that their language, being drawn from their immediate intercourse with the great things of nature, is nearest to that original language of nature from which all the higher forms of language are derived. But Coleridge denies that rural life produces high types of character. Perhaps it is his recently acquired fear of advancing democracy that makes him here depreciate the lower classes in both intellectual and moral respects, and to think that nothing good can come from them. Yet Scott was showing in his own time and many have shown since, how much truth, humour and pathos can be drawn from the lives of the common people, and can be expressed in language much the same as their own. Wordsworth saw much more deeply than Coleridge did, and was free from his prejudices.

6. Coleridge further points out that the language of such uneducated people differs from that of the educated in this : that it is broken up into short incoherent statements, and that this is inconsistent with the nature of poetry, in which the thought flows on continuously. He quotes a

stanza of Wordsworth in which the composition is of that broken and rustic style, and another in which it is continuous and imaginative; and this shows, he assumes, that Wordsworth, to be poetic, must depart from the rustic style. But (1) the first-quoted stanza is really meant to be metrical prose, being a passage of explanation or transition, and (2) the second stanza is peotry not because of its language, but because of its thought and feeling, and the pictures which it paints.

7. He argues against Wordsworth that the *use of metre entails an important difference* between the language of poetry and that of prose. "Metre paves the way for other distinctions." For metre, he argues, does not come to the poet spontaneously altogether—along with spontaneous power it requires an effort of will; and art and will, in making verse, must produce a frequency of forms and figures of speech greater than could be desired or endured in the absence of metre. This also, he argues, will make an essential difference of language between poetry and prose.

Thus Coleridge thinks the effect of metre is to make poetry more flowery and rhetorical than prose. Wordsworth, with more consistancy thinks that, if its effect is to moderate poetical style and check extravagance, this will lead to the avoidance of rhetorical digression and reduction to the simplest forms of expression. If poetry is "passion," it is passion "recollected in tranquillity"—the calm reflection, not "the

tumult of the soul"—and to this calm of soul metre will contribute.

8. Finally he attempts to establish (against Wordsworth) by a series of examples, his view "that there may be, is, and ought to be, an *essential* difference between the language of prose and that of poetry." But he can do so only by assuming that whenever Wordsworth himself or any other poet produces poetry, his work *must* for that reason be contrary to Wordsworth's theory of poetic language, *i.e.*, if it is good poetry it must be composed in language essentially different from that of prose. But the passages quoted differ from prose, not to any considerable extent in the language used, but in their bringing out the poetical aspects of things—in the thought and feelings which they suggest—and the pictorial vividness of their presentation.

Conclusion.

This controversy regarding the language of poetry went on for a long time, and is not fully settled even yet. The authority of Coleridge has been so great on all matters relating to poetry that most critics seem to have assumed, as a matter of course, that all that he said on the subject must have been right. Notwithstanding, it is clear that on the whole Wordsworth's principles hold good; that poetry

is most effective when expressed in the simplest and most natural language; that its effect would be impaired by artificial diction; that such diction is of use only to disguise the want of real poetic power; and that those who depend on "poetic diction" to produce interest are not genuine poets. (It may be possible indeed to find a kind of pleasure occasionally in variety, harmony, novelty and "picturesqueness" of language, as in some early poems of Tennyson, even when there is but little thought underlying it. It is so also in some poems of Swinburne and even in Keats's "On a drear-nighted December," the magical effect of which is due wholly to the harmony of the lines. But such verbal music without thought, when carried too far, becomes cloying.) After Wordsworth the poetic style of the 18th century soon disappeared, and most subsequent poetry has shown the influence of his teaching and example. There have indeed been attempts to establish new kinds of poetic diction (*e.g.* by Meredith and Francis Thompson) but they do not seem to have obtained much following. Simplicity and directness of statement have become the rule.

PART V.

Aristotle's Theory of Poetry.

About 330 B.C. Aristotle wrote a short treatise on Poetry which is commonly known as Aristotle's "Poetics." It seems (like some other extant works of Aristotle), not to have been intended for publication, and to be only a series of notes for lectures, very condensed, and requiring some expansion and explanation by the lecturer. The portions of this syllabus dealing with tragic and epic poetry have been preserved. It is the earliest, and has been regarded as the most authoritative expression of what is commonly called the classical type of poetry; and has often been edited, translated and commented on as such, and some points raised by it have given rise to much discussion.

His purpose, he says, is to treat of poetry in itself, and of the various kinds of poetry with their distinguishing characteristics, and to consider the number and nature of the parts into which a good poem should be divided, and how the parts are to be combined together to constitute a complete poem.

The principal kinds of poetry are epic poetry, tragedy and comedy, and lyric, while song and the music of flute and lyre are so often

combined with the action as to be itself almost an element of the poetry. Of these, in the extant portion of the treatise, tragedy is treated at length, epic more briefly, comedy very slightly, and lyric is only referred to. Tragedy gets fullest consideration because he considers it the highest kind, so that in dealing with it, he is dealing with the fundamental nature of poetry itself. Epic is comparatively lengthy, but is superficial and wanting in unity. Tragedy is poetry condensed, penetrates deeper into human nature, and is more capable of that unity and symmetry of many parts in one organic whole, which is the principal aim of classic poetry.

Nature of Poetry.

§2. All forms of poetry consist fundamentally of *imitation* (the word used, *viz.*, *mimesis*, is always translated *imitation*, though it seems to contain a shade of meaning not contained in the English word as commonly used, *viz.*, imitation by re-construction).

This is true of the other arts as well;—all are imitations of nature and real life, and differ mainly in the objects imitated, the materials in which they imitate them, and their methods of imitation. Thus music imitates the different sounds of nature, and also (though less directly) human thought, feeling and character. Dancing

by movement and attitude imitates not only the motions and forms of nature but also to some extent, feeling and character. Poetry imitates the actions of men and thereby their thoughts, feelings and characters, and does so through the medium of language, with its meanings, its rhythm and harmony. And the different forms of poetry are distinguished by the different ways in which it imitates human action—tragedy doing it in one way, epic and lyric in other ways. Each of these, again, will differ within itself according as it represents men as they really are, or as better or worse than they really are. Thus tragedy represents them as greater and nobler than in actual life; comedy, as lower, meaner, worse.

Source of pleasure in poetry.

§3. But why do people care for poetry? Poetry has its source in *two* fundamental tendencies seated deep in human nature.

(*a*) The instinctive tendency to imitate and find pleasure in imitation, which manifests itself in man from childhood onwards. Indeed, man differs from other living creatures, chiefly in this, that he is of all animals the most given to imitation; and it is by imitation that he learns his first lessons in the arts of life, and acquires his powers of doing things beyond the reach of

animals. For this reason, then, that his life depends so much on imitation, nature has so constituted him as to take delight in imitation; and all his life he practises imitation, even when it is merely for the pleasure which it gives him, without practical use. Thus imitation has two reasons: (*i*) it is by imitating that man learns the necessary arts of life, and (*ii*) hence successful imitation comes to be in itself a source of pleasure.

Now this pleasure which imitation gives is the main motive force underlying poetry, sculpture, and painting, or what we call the fine arts, the pleasure which they all give being essentially that of imitation. It may be observed that, like Shelley, he makes all these to be forms of poetry in the widest sense of the word (*poiesis* or making).

(*b*) But he admits that poetry is source of another kind of pleasure: we are so constituted by nature as to find delight in *rhythm* and *harmony*, and these sources of pleasure also are found in poetry (not to speak of the other fine arts). These are included under the general head of *metre*.

Rhythm, Metre and Harmony.

Rhythm comes from a word meaning to *flow* and signifies the way in which one process flows on continuously into another, without

break or interruption—one sound and articulation into another, one thought and feeling into another, one movement, form or colour into another, and so on—without any such interruption as would necessitate a new beginning with the effort which it requires. In language, this *flow* is exhibited in the succession of articulate sounds in both prose and verse, so that we may distinguish between prose rhythm and poetry rhythm—that of prose being usually unintentional and occasional, that of poetry, continuous, intentional and elaborate. This verbal *rhythm* or flow is attained by avoiding combinations of vowels without consonants (*hiatus*) and of consonants without vowels (*harshness*) because such combinations obstruct the flow of the voice in pronunciation, especially consonantal harshness. That difficulty is felt especially when the consonants stand in *unstressed* syllables. The difficulty is relieved by throwing 'stress' or force (quantity) upon the syllable, which is equivalent to separating the consonants and giving more time to each, thereby lessening the difficulty of pronunciation. Another way of avoiding harshness is by the insertion of 'helping' vowels (as when we say Park-i-Street for the harsh combination, Park Street). It is difficult to pronounce 3, or even 2 consonants together.

The metre of the Latin and Greek languages (called quantitative), is founded on the principle

of avoiding hiatuses of vowels, and overcoming harshness of consonants by making sure that combinations of two or three consonants shall occur only in stressed syllables allowing time for each consonant, instead of taking them all in one mouthful, so to speak. (From this difficulty of avoiding such combinations in unstressed syllables rises the difficulty which English poets have found in reviving the metres of ancient poets, as Longfellow has attempted in *Evangeline*, Kingsley in *Andromeda*, etc.)

Metres (measures), again, are the smallest measurements or successive units of movement, into which the flowing stream of articulate sound can be cut up. Thus sequences of long and short vowels with stressed and unstressed consonants, give iambus, trochee, spondee, dactyle, etc.—commonly called *feet*.—Regularly recurring series of feet in fixed numbers constitute lines (or verses) as 4, 5 or 6 iambuses producing iambic tetrameters, pentameters, hexameters, etc.—such studied regularity of recurring feet making the difference which distinguishes poetry rhythm from that of prose. And it is by securing a succession of agreeable feet that rhythm is obtained and utterance is made easy and agreeable.

Different forms of rhythm (or series of feet) are suited to imitate and express different kinds of thought and feeling. Thus iambic metres are most suitable for dialogue as in tragedy; dactylic hexameters for rapid narration as in

epic; trochaic measures for light and nimble movement, as in dancing, etc.

Harmony comes from a word meaning to fit the parts of a thing together; and is realised when things are so connected with each other that mind can pass easily from one to another, and can easily think and feel them all together as one whole—as the sounds of different instructions and voices in music, and the ideas and sounds which together make up a poem. Its opposite, *discord*, is when the things are such that mind cannot pass from one to another without feeling a disagreeable shock, nor comprise them all together in one complex conception as parts of one whole without painful effort and feeling of contradiction. (Part VII)

Therefore *rhythm* refers to things in succession and is what enables mind to pass on easily from one thing to another in a series. Harmony refers more especially to things simultaneous; and is what enables mind to grasp easily many constituents in one whole of thought and feeling. Therefore they are but different forms of the same quality, and taken together, they constitute what is most fundamental in the classical conception of poetry and art. In different arts they appeal to the mind in different ways: in music, they appeal to it through the ear; in painting, sculpture, architecture through the eye. The rhythm and harmony of poetry however are more complex, being partly of articulations and sounds, but largely of ideas and feelings; making poetry to be more intellectual

than the other arts—"the most philosophical of the arts." Thus *a poem is a complex harmony of (i) physical movements and efforts of the muscles of speech, (ii) sounds affecting the ear, and (iii) ideas and feelings passing through the mind.*

Aristotle and Shelley.

§4. Thus poetry has its origin in two instinctive impulses inherent in mind—the craving for imitation and the craving for rhythm and harmony, with the pleasure which follows from the satisfaction of both. Aristotle may be here compared with Shelley. With regard to the second source of poetry, *viz.*, harmony, they are at one. With regard to the first, *viz.*, imitation, there appears to be a somewhat essential difference. According to Shelley, all art begins *from* imitation. "In the youth of the world men dance and sing and imitate natural objects." But it is not art, strictly speaking, until it rises above imitation in the common sense of the word, *i.e.*, until it ceases to consist in a mere copying of things, and begins to improve upon things and produce something better than is in nature. It must cease to be merely imitative, and become original and creative. "There is really no creator except God and the poet." The poet lays hold mentally of the forces of nature, and makes them work together and co-operate in such a way as to realise the idea of something above nature.

But what did Aristotle really mean by *mimesis* (always translated, imitation)? Does he mean literally imitation in the sense of copying and reproducing things, as commonly understood? In one place he tells us that it is not the function of the poet merely "to relate or describe what has happened"; that is the function ot the historian. The poet is to represent "things which might be" or "probably will be" or "must be"—applying to his work the principles of probability and necessity. This clearly implies that it is the function of the poet to see into the laws of life, and to show how these laws will operate under circumstances different from those of actual experience, and thereby produce events, characters and results different from those seen in real life. "Therefore poetry is higher and more philosophical than history." For history is superficial in this sense, that it shows only the things which present themselves in experience—"the things which are" here and now. It looks at things from the outside and records what takes place. The poet sees into the laws which produce things, and thereby sees what must be true in all times and places universally. He sees into the springs of things, which are above place and time, in the infinite itself (Shelley and Wordsworth).

Dramatic Poetry.

§5. Poetical composition divides itself into two branches corresponding to different dispositions on the part of its writers and readers.

Some minds dwell naturally on great events and noble characters and things affecting deeply

the destinies of men, and prefer to think of events exciting the deeper passions of human nature. Other minds turn naturally to small things, trifling events, and mean persons, and take delight in exhibiting what is low and contemptible, thereby raising laughter.

Minds of the former kind turn either to narrative poetry, imitating the lives of great men, and great events, and produce heroic or epic poetry, like Homer; or to tragedy, imitating in condensed style the deepest passions of mind, and the darkest vicissitudes of life, and raising feelings of pity and terror, like Æschylus and Sophocles. Those of the second class will produce satires, burlesques (*satyrical* farces) and comedies, exposing what is mean and perverse in life, as Aristophanes had done.

As the form which the drama took at first depended on the way in which it originated, it is well to notice the *origin* of the drama. The *drama* or poetical imitation of action (from a verb to *do* or *act*) originated, it is believed, in religious worship, especially of Dionysus, god of nature, and began in the dithyrambs or choral hymns, sung by choirs of singers moving round the altar of the god. The hymns, recounted the life and achievements of the god and his services to humanity. But the hymns proving monotonous, came to be varied by the introduction at intervals, of a reciter who

recited with appropiate gestures the doings of the god. Then another reciter was introduced, and reciting took the form of acting—imitating incidents in the life of the god. Gradually the element of acting assumed more importance, and the choruses were reduced to short hymns in intervals between the incidents of the action—commenting on and pointing out the moral lessons of the action. Then secular subjects were introduced, though always, in tragedy, with some religous or moral significance.

Hence tragedies of the Greek type were shorter than those of modern times, simpler in structure, and were varied with choral song, dancing and music, which Aristotle seems to consider inseparable from dramatic poetry; and continued to have a more or less religious and ethical significance. Comedy became freer in subjects and construction, and lost altogether the original religious character of drama.

The Tragic Drama.

§6. The highest kind of poetry, Aristotle thinks, is tragedy, and to it, he devotes the greater part of his treatise. "Tragedy is the imitation of a great and impressive event, having a certain duration and complexity, and forming a complete whole in itself (*i.e.*, having a definite beginning, middle and end); it is expressed in

language made agreeable by rhythm, harmony and music, varying in keeping with the thought and tone of different parts of the work ; it is not merely recited like an epic but acted before an audience, and, by exciting pity and fear, it effects a purgation (*katharsis*) of such like passions."

The only part of this definition or description that presents any difficulty is the last clause, what does Aristotle mean by this *katharsis* (purgation or purifying away) of pity and fear, and how does the tragedy accomplish such a purgation. ? This question has excited a vast amount of discussion, but no satisfactory result has been arrived at. It is possible indeed that to Aristotle's mind, the word here simply referred to the over-powering passions of the mind (ambition, envy, revenge and the like) which naturally lead on to pitiable and fearful consequences—in which case the purgation will consist in repressing these passions by exhibiting on the stage their fearful consequences.

It is an imitation of an event (action) of "some magnitude," and such an event will contain under it many subordinate incidents; and these taken together will constitute the story or plot, which is the substance of the play—the imitation of some situation in real life.

These again require persons who act, *the dramatis personæ*—and the actions of the

persons rise out of their *thought*, and their thought rises out of their intellectual and moral *character*. Hence in considering a play, we have to consider the persons and their thought and characters or predominant desires.

But their thought and therefore their characters are expressed in their language or *diction* and their diction is made more expressive by the rhythm of the words, and to attain the indispensible rhythm their diction takes a *metrical* form, and the rhythm of the metre is deepened in parts by instrumental *music* and *song* (*viz.*, in the choral parts). And the whole takes place on a particular spot with a particular set of surroundings which is the *scenery* of the play.

Hence the elements of a tragedy are plot, thought and character, language and rhythm, song and scenery.

Which of these elements, then, is the most fundamental (*i.e.*, the one out of which the others arise)? Many assume, Aristotle says, that it is *character*. And many at the present day think so too: and some novelists and poets introduce lengthy descriptions of character (*e.g.*, G. Eliot, Browning, etc.); and some dramatists have introduced long speeches merely to bring out the characters of persons, but which have little or nothing to do with the action. But Aristotle thinks that this is bad art; the poet himself says

nothing about the characters of the story. The play is an imitation of action and the main business of the poet is with the action. But the action should rise in a natural way out of the natures of the persons, and the circumstances in which they are placed. Hence the spectator can see the characters as manifested in their action, and the skill of the poet consists in making it easy for him to do so, by means of his plot. Hence, Aristotle thinks, the plot is the "principle" or foundation out of which all the rest of the play arises—"the soul" as it were "of the whole tragedy." Tragedy is a representation of action, and the characters of the persons are revealed incidentally in their actions. It is in this that real dramatic art consists.

And in working out his plot the poet has to take care that all the actions rise naturally out of the circumstances and characters of the persons, so that the spectator can see them for himself, without their being described by the poet. Hence,

The Definition.

Thus tragedy consists in beginning with a certain *situation* in which persons of certain natures are exposed to the influences of certain circumstances; and showing what *fatal result*

(*dénouement*) will follow from the inter-action of these forces of character and circumstances.

This self-development of action peculiar to tragedy, makes tragedy to be most philosophical and therefore the highest form of poetry, while poetry in general is the most philosophical form of art.

Structure: fundamental unity.

§7. The principal consideration, then, according to Aristotle, is the *plot* of the play and its structure, because it is through these that thought and character are revealed. What he says regarding structure is of interest, because the modern idea of a play of the classical or Greek type is drawn mainly from what Aristotle said on this subject, or is deduced from what he said.

The fundamental condition of a good play, and that out of which its other conditions rise, is *unity of structure*. It must contain a plurality of parts, and the parts must rise out of one another and depend on one another in such a way that they make up one self-consistent whole (*viz.*, as forming parts or branches of one comprehensive event and corresponding to the natural development of events in real life).

Hence a tragedy must have a certain "magnitude," *i.e.*, must include a certain number of parts, and its beauty will consist (partly at least)

in such co-ordination of all its parts (like the parts of a living organism) as will make them all to be *one*. And in order that they may be made to be one, "the parts of the action must be such that, if any one of them is withdrawn or removed to another place, the whole work is broken up and disorganised (repeated by Coleridge). And this harmony of parts which makes the many to be one, is the main condition of the beautiful. If the thing is too small there can be no parts to produce harmony, and if too large, the mind cannot grasp the whole as one.

The Minor Unities.

From this fundamental condition of *unity* or harmony of parts to make one living whole, the much discussed *unities* of *time*, *place* and *tone* may be deduced :—

(*a*) *Of Time.* If the action imitated be drawn out through a long period of years, it will not be one, but will consist of events many and unconnected and therefore inconsistent with the organic unity required by the principle of the beautiful. Unity therefore requires that the action be limited to a short time—Aristotle himself suggests: within the limits of one revolution of the sun. For the same reason all plays of the classical type have been limited to one day—Italian, and French down to the triumph of the romantic movement

about 1830, and in certain English plays of the same type composed as experiments (Milton's *Samson*, Swinburne's *Atalanta* and *Erechtheus*, and most plays of Ben Jonson). In Shakespeare, on the contrary, the action often extends over many years (*e.g.*, in *Macbeth* and *Winter's Tale*).

(*b*) *Of Place.* Again if the action be divided between several places, the incidents cannot have that connection with each other which dramatic unity requires. Therefore, in plays of the classical type, the action represented is confined to one place—no change of scene is admitted. Events which take place elsewhere but are necessary to complete the story, have to be related before the audience by a "messenger" (which introduces into the Greek play an element of epic narrative).

(*c*) *Of Tone.* Finally tragical incidents and comical incidents appeal to different states of mind so that when the mind is in a state adapted to the one kind, it is pained by having the other suddenly forced upon it. Therefore the combination of tragical and comical incident in the play is inconsistent with the unity and harmony required by poetical art.

Therefore in plays of the classical type comical incidents are excluded from tragedy. Yet some have argued that they rather heighten each other's effect by contrast. Thus the porter's

scene in *Macbeth* has been adduced as an example. Others think that the comic degrades and destroys the effect of the tragic, and ask the question: Can Shakespeare himself have written the porter-scene?

Unity of structure, then, is a condition of all art. That it should be carried so far as to include the above minor unities in drama, is held only by the extreme classical school.

Particular Effects.

§8. Tragedy, then, is an imitation of action such as excites fear and pity. The effect is greater when an exciting incident comes as a *surprise*. But this effect will be destroyed altogether if the exciting incident comes in abruptly as if introduced artificially. To be truly surprising it must rise naturally, though unexpectedly, out of the circumstances and character of the person.

This is why the conclusions of the plays of Euripides are sometimes unsatisfactory. In some cases he cannot make the result which he desires, work itself out naturally from preceding circumstances; but makes a god come down on the stage (by some theatrical mechanism), and bring about the desired conclusion miraculously (whence the jest about a *deus ex machina* or god coming down unexpectedly in a theatrical

machine, to set things right.). This has something in common with the artifice resorted to by modern novelists and play-writers when they meet the same difficulty, *viz.*, "the long arm of coincidence."

Surprises in Greek plays often took the forms of unexpected *recognitions*. A person is suddenly discovered to be a different person from what was supposed (a device at one time very common also in modern plays and novels).

Another kind of surprise is the sudden *reversal* of some expected result. Events seem to be tending inevitably towards a certain result, but in the end they are found to lead (though naturally) to a result quite different from what was expected. This appears sometimes as the *irony* of fate—a person thinks he is working out some great good for himself, but finds in the end that he has really been bringing about his own ruin (frequent in Sophocles).

He tells us that the characters should be *representatives*, *i.e.*, every one should present in himself the general characters of his class (and Coleridge says the same thing). But if this generalising tendency were carried too far, the persons would not be concrete living beings, but personified abstractions (as indeed they are in some modern plays and novels).

It is not necessary to enter into the different ways by which recognitions and reversals were

brought about in Greek plays as analysed by Aristotle.

Poetic Justice : the proper subjects of Tragedy.

The distinctive mark of tragedy, then, is that it imitates actions productive of *pity* and *fear*. But in many cases these emotions cannot be produced without producing at the same time such painful effects as will destroy the pleasure of art. Subjects of this cruel kind are unfit for poetic treatment.

Thus the sight of a perfectly virtuous man brought down from prosperity to hopeless adversity, is not a fitting subject because it shocks our feeling of moral consistency and justice. The sight of a thoroughly bad man raised to prosperity is unsuitable for the same reason. The proper medium (Aristotle's "golden means" between extremes) is to be found in the lives of men in ordinary circumstances (not too good nor too bad for dramatic treatment), *viz.*, when such men fall into adversity through some fault or error of their own. Such a person may be in a position of great reputation and prosperity, but he may have committed some error in his past life or have some weakness which has escaped notice, and this error or weakness may work out consequences unobserved, and may lead at last to tragical catastrophe (what about *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*,

Othello? This question of the truly tragic has given rise to much discussion—see Bradley's Essay).

But what are the actions which affect us most strongly with pity or fear? They must be actions of persons on persons—not physical catastrophes of nature. Aristotle, looking back over the Greek tragic drama, comes to the conclusion that the most fearful and pitiable occurrences, are fatal injuries inflicted by members of a family against other members of the same. Such stories of family crime and error were frequent in the Greek cycles of legend, and were the favourite subjects of the great tragedians, Æschylus and Sophocles; and this makes Aristotle think that incidents of this kind must be the most "tragical" and moving of all.

Dénouement.

§ 9. A Greek tragedy involves two phases—the *complication*, or gathering of events towards a crisis involving some mystery or difficulty, and the *solution* or *dénouement*—the unravelling of the mystery, or solving of the difficulty. And these phases—complication and result—should work themselves out naturally. The fault of Euripides in his dénouements has been referred to above.

Diction in Tragedy.

As for the diction, language and style of tragedy—its great excellence consists in this, that it be *clear* without being *mean*. This brings up the modern question of "poetic diction." There are two extremes,—*meanness* on the one side, and *extravagance* on the other—both bad imitations. In avoiding the one extreme, the poet must guard himself against falling into the other.

Clearness can be best attained by the use of common words. But this may give his work the appearance of being low and mean. On the other hand, an appearance of depth and grandeur may be attained by the use of *unusual* words and phrases, by which he means such as are rare, metaphorical, periphrastic. But a work composed mainly in language of this kind would be but a mass of riddles and barbarisms (jargon).

The best language, then must be that lying in the middle between such extremes (the "golden mean"). The proper use of selected words, idioms and metaphors not in common use, will raise the style above commonplace; and the use of familiar words in the right places will give it perspicuity (compare Wordsworth).

Critics, Aristotle thinks, have not observed how much the effect of a verse depends often on a single word, and how much it may be weakened by a too common word, and how much it may

be strengthened by one less familiar. Nevertheless he shows that even at that time there were critics like Wordsworth, who ridiculed poets for trusting for effect to the use of uncommon words and artificial phrases (as Longinus did afterwards). The comic poet Aristophanes had written a play contrasting humourously the grandiose style represented by Æschylus (with "horse-hair crested words" like warriors and "high-stepping phrases" like war-horses) with the creeping, quibbling language of Euripides, the sophist and splitter of hairs.

As for metaphor—which he explains as the "carrying over" of a word from one object to another on account of their having something in common—he does not seem to understand its use and effect as Shelley does. The latter understood it as an indispensable means of bringing out the deeper meanings of things, by picturing the abstract in the concrete. Aristotle seems to regard it rather as a kind of ornament merely, used chiefly in poetry, and helping to distinguish poetry from prose, and to be used sparingly. Indeed fully expressed metaphors are but little used in the classic tragedians, who seem to regard metaphors as ornaments merely, and to regard ornament as a useless excrescence. These more elementary ones which are necessary to the making of words as Shelley shows, are of course as common as in other highly developed languages.

Epic Poetry.

§10. With poetic imitation in the form of narrative, Aristotle does not speak at such great length in the treatise (though its epics are now considered the chief glory of Greek poetry). This however is partly because much of what he has said of tragedy applies to epic also.

An epic must not be like a history. A history is a record of a series of events running on indefinitely, without beginning or end, with no connection but time and space. Nor a biography, recounting all a man's actions from birth to death.

Like a tragedy, epic must deal with a single event containing under it many constituent incidents, but at the same time forming one connected whole, having a definite beginning, middle and end—though it will cover more incidents and extend over a longer time, and therefore possess less dependence of parts and self-development, and less artistic unity than a tragedy.

Still it must possess sufficient unity of plan and purpose to be embraced within a single comprehensive *view* as an organic whole—otherwise it would not be one poem (in the classical sense). For this purpose an epic also must be contained within a reasonable limit of time. Hence the whole 10 years' War of Troy, or the whole life of Achilles, could not be brought within the scope

of one epic poem. The poet must, therefore, fix upon some crisis or climax in a history or life, and deal chiefly with the incidents contained within this critical phase and its own immediate *dénouement*, leaving the rest of the history or life to be known from reference or implication. Really necessary incidents not falling within the chosen crisis, may be related by some of the characters of the epic, by way of episode or digression from the main narrative (as the past adventures of Ulysses told by himself in the *Odyssey*; the past wanderings of Æneas in the *Æneid*; the story of revolt in heaven and creation of the earth, told by *Raphael* in *Paradise Lost*). But so far as the main body of the epic is concerned the poet should "plunge at once into the middle of things" avoiding inessential preliminaries.

The epic poet is able to include much more material in his poem than the tragic poet. The tragedian can include only what he can represent on the stage, and that is only the events of a particular day and place. The epic poet can include events removed from one another in place and time. He can use the same elements of character and surprise and mysteries of plot, and can present what might or should be, as much as the tragedian. But the looseness of structure and absence of strict development inseparable from the Epic makes Aristotle

think that tragedy is a higher form of poetry than epic.

Aristotle remarks, like Wordsworth, that there may be intervals in the epic narrative which do not give any opportunity for poetic treatment. What is to be done with these? Wordsworth thinks that they should be given just as what they are, *i.e.*, as simple prose (perhaps metrical). Aristotle, however, seems to think with 18th century poets and Coleridge that in such places the style should be more carefully "elaborated" than elsewhere, by which he seems to mean that the commonness of the passage should be concealed by rhetorical ornament (poetic diction). Passages full of action and character are spoilt, he admits (as Wordsworth held) by artificial ornaments of style; but in such vacant places, rhetorical diction will be excusable.

The extant portion of the treatise ends with discussion of the comparative ranks of Tragic and Epic poetry with the result here referred to. Comedy is but slightly treated and lyric poetry, only referred to. These may have been treated fully in a part which has been lost.

PART VI

Types of Poetry: Classic and Romantic

Two Types of Poetry. Poetic genius is the power of seeing, and communicating certain kinds of truth by embodying it in concrete ideas and fixing it in language—thereby making it permanent and communicable. But there are different ways of obtaining truths and different ways of expressing them in ideas and language. It follows accordingly that there will be different types of poetry.

One way of obtaining materials for poetry will be to observe minutely and preserve in memory the appearances of things in outward nature and the actions of human beings, and form from them general ideas regarding nature and human life. Then poetry may be attained by representing truths thus obtained in new and unexpected combinations, and expressing them in such ways that things already generally known or within the reach of all, are made to appear new, and to be striking, surprising and instructive.

The truth presented in poetry of this kind, being derived from general experience such as is open to all, need not be absolutely new. The

interest will lie not so much in what is expressed as in the way of expressing it—"truth known before, but ne'er so well expressed." It will be poetry of art,—its art consisting in expressing common ideas in such ways as to make them impressive and suggestive and make them linger in the mind.

Its text-books of poetic art (it may be said) will be such as Aristotle's *Poetics*, Horace's Epistle *an Poetry*, Boileau's *The Poetic Art*, and Pope's Essay on *Criticism*, and its models will be the masterpieces of ancient poetry, called classical, and modern French literature down to 1830. It will have a tendency to realism in poetry, *i.e.*, to dealing with things as they appear in every day experience and exciting interest by new combination and felicitous expression. Its typical poets therefore will be Horace and Pope.

But there is another way of arriving at that kind of truth of which poetry is the expression. The poet's mind may be endowed with such sensitiveness to reality that deep truths of nature and life open up to his mind as inner vision ("the vision and the faculty divine"). He does not collect them laboriously from books and experience—they may come to him spontaneously and invest themselves in language with little or no effort on the part of the poet himself. And in this power of seeing and expressing new truth spontaneously that the highest poetic genius will

consist. One cannot write a poem by merely trying, Shelley teaches. "If poetry comes not as naturally as leaves to the tree, it had better not come at all," Keats says. This appeal to inspiration and originality and vision of truth beyond experience gives the Romantic type of poetry.

To be sure a poet cannot at every moment and at every point of his subject, be moved by inspiration of this sort,—a long poem cannot be all poetry, Coleridge says; but flashes of insight will be always occurring to him (as to Shakespeare) and it is this power of seeing truths which others do not see that constitutes the essential gift of the poet. It is true that in finding the best language to express his vision, effort and art may be needed, but the substance of the highest poetry cannot be produced by these alone.

This has been the case with all great poets at all times. But the predominance of the too artificial poetry of the classical type during the so-called classical period led to a reaction, *viz.*, the new "romantic" movement of the 19th century, which made more explicit the spontaneous and inspirational character of the highest poetry, and this power was exemplified in Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and Coleridge.

Poetry of this kind may have a tendency to be transcendental, metaphysical, mystical and visionary in its thought, and, short of that, will have

special interest in what is deep, mysterious and wonderful in adventures and stirring deeds.

I

The Classical Type.

Aristotle's "Poetics" again.

The word *classical* (belonging to the highest class) was applied to the masterpieces of Greek (primarily) and Roman literature, which had been preserved from ancient times, and were looked up to as standards for imitation during the European renascence in the 15th and 16th centuries; and has been used ever since, of works following these ancient models closely in style and excellence. We here consider more closely the significance of the term as applied to modern literature and especially to poetry. The principles underlying it are traceable back to the philosopher Aristotle, being either contained in or deducible from his teaching.

Among the extant works of Aristotle there is a small treatise on poetry, commonly known as Aristotle's "Poetics." This is not a complete work but rather a series of notes, written probably for lectures, or for expansion subsequently into a book. But even as a syllabus of poetics it is incomplete, as it treats only of dramatic and epic poetry, containing only slight

references to the third kind, *viz.*, lyric, though so much cultivated in his own country.

All poetry deals with human life, and there are three kinds. Dramatic, which he seems to consider the highest kind, goes to the roots, so to speak, of life by laying hold in each drama of some deep trait of human character, and showing how, in given circumstances, it will work itself out naturally, and what consequences it will lead to. It shows life developing life from the inside. Epic views life from the outside, and describes externally the actions in which the mind's inner motives and character manifest themselves to the world outwardly. Lyric poetry is that in which the individual expresses to himself and others the feelings of gladness or sorrow which pass through his mind in consequence of his relations with other beings round him. Of these, he bestows most consideration on the tragic drama.

He had had before him all the literature of his own country (the only literature within his reach) and had examined closely what was best in it; and as a philosopher he had considered in what its excellence consisted. There must be reasons he saw, why one work is better than another, and set himself to find out the reasons of such excellence: and by thus seeking the principle underlying literary values he laid the foundations of literary criticism,—the art of determining from principles what is good and

not good, higher and lower, in literary work. There probably were in Aristotle's time as in that of Coleridge, critics who pronounced judgments of eulogy and condemnation on literary works, without being able to give reasons for them, and Aristotle saw the want, and commenced to work out a remedy by sketching the syllabus known as his "poetics."

In reviewing the great poetical productions of his country Aristotle perceives certain peculiarities of form or structure to be common to all the best, and sees that these structural forms contribute essentially to the excellence of the works, and suggests that these forms should be reduced to principles and used as standards by other authors in subsequent works. He does not indeed say dogmatically that such forms are essential to good poetry as some of his followers have done, but rather explains, reasons and suggests.

But later critics, ancient and modern—Latin, Italian and French—deduced mainly from the suggestions of Aristotle, a system of rules which they considered to be essential to excellence in the different kinds of poetry. These rules, contained in, or deduced from the teaching of Aristotle, became the regulative principles of that type of poetry which has been called classical, *i.e.*, that which follows classical example.

His fundamental principle: Unity in Variety.

We have then to enquire: what is *the fundamental principle* out of which these rules spring, and which gives their *fundamental principle*,—their meaning and justification—to the literary characteristics commonly called classical

Now we can see that so far as this treatise is concerned, Aristotle was looking mainly at the *form* or *structure* of the works before him; and saw one peculiarity of form to be essential to their greatness, and indeed to that of all works of art, *viz.*, *Unity in Variety.*

A poem, to be beautiful, must be one, and at the same time it must be many. How then is this unification of the Many into One brought about? In this way: many things may be brought together and made to co-operate in serving one common purpose. Then the common purpose which brings the parts together makes them to be one in the sense that the one purpose realises itself through the many parts, and the parts are made to be what they are by their subservience to the purpose. Thus the new one is made to be what it is by the many and the many are made to be what they are by the one. This then is Unity through Variety, and is aimed at in all art. A blank empty *one* is not beautiful, and a plurality of unconnected *ones* is not beautiful,

but the attainment of oneness through plurality is an essential element in whatever is *beautiful*. And it was this condition of the beautiful that most attracted Aristotle in the great poems of his country, and has been accepted as principal element by the classical school. And this is not to be wondered at, considering that the correlation of many in one is the means by which nature itself works out its highest purposes, (as those of life in the plant and animal organism).

How then is this Unity in Variety—this oneness in plurality—to be attained in literature? In literature it appears as oneness of subject and purpose in a plurality of parts. A single subject expands into a variety of details and these details serve the purpose of exhibiting explicitly all that was contained implicitly in the subject—*e.g.*, as causes, consequents, concomitants—making the subject to be now fully known and understood. Therefore these details form with the subject, one and the same whole of thought—a one which contains many within it—a unity in variety—a one which is at the same time many like the living products of nature.

Thus Milton had before him as subject the "fall of man" through moral evil. This subject resolved itself in his mind, into certain subordinate questions implied in it and essential to

its being understood,—as the ultimate origin of evil, the origin of man, and the communication of evil to man, and its consequences. Each of these involved other details; but all these details contribute to the one common purpose of making clear the fall of man, and therefore form with it one whole of thought. The subject of the "wrath of Achilles" resolves itself into the causes and many consequences of the quarrel between the chiefs, which bring nearly to ruin the Greeks engaged in the siege of Troy, but converge at last to a common dénouement favourable to them. A germ of selfish ambition in an otherwise heroic nature works itself out in the stormy career of Macbeth, ending at last in his ruin. The song of the nightingale makes Keats think of the sadness of his own life, and that thought resolves itself into a fanciful contrast between the nightingale and himself, which finds expression in a series of images picturing the life of the more fortunate bird, and these form one whole of thought and feeling in which his sadness finds relief for a time.

Results which follow from its application.—And we can see that this principle of unity strictly applied, will exclude from the poem or work of art everything that does not contribute in any way to the one common purpose, and therefore does not harmonize

with the other details in forming one consistent whole.

Thus the excellence of a poem will come to depend largely on its *form*, *i.e.*, on the art with which all its parts are adjusted together so as to co-operate in giving expression to one fundamental idea, thus constituting one harmonious whole. Not so much is said by classical critic about the substance of the poetry.

How then does Aristotle apply this fundamental principle of unity in variety to the different kinds of poetry? He shows at some length how it affects the drama; and less fully how it applies to epic—considering how it was realised in the great dramas and epics of his own country.

(*a*) *Unity of Subject and parts.*

(A) *As applied to Drama*: The fundamental law of form will be unity of one subject developing itself through many parts into the higher unity of a many in one. There will be one fundamental idea and purpose underlying the whole, *viz.*, to show how a particular action or trait of character will work itself out in a series of consequent actions which will all converge to the production of one common result, in which the fundamental purpose of the poet is realised. Unity will require that all the incidents and ideas introduced, rise naturally out of the subject

and contribute to the final result, and will exclude everything superfluous and irrelevant.

And yet, for the sake of variety, dramatists have been tempted sometimes to introduce more than one subject, concealing the incoherence of the two in the best way they can. Thus in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* the story of the pound of flesh and that of the ring are but slightly connected. And even in the Greek drama itself the rule was sometimes violated, as often by Euripides, *e.g.*, in his *Hecuba* the story of Polyxena and that of Polymnestor have no other connection than that of contributing to the sorrows of Hecuba.

But such connection and sequence of ideas as unity requires will, according to Aristotle or at least, to his classical followers, entail certain secondary unities which have figured prominently in the history of the drama. Thus it requires, they have held,—

(*b*) *Unity of time*: if the events represented on the stage are such as must occur at different periods of time with intervals, shorter or longer, between them, then many other events must have occurred in the intervals which are not represented. Therefore, such intervals interrupt the continuity of the action represented—it will not be one continuous action, in its successive phases merely, but a plurality of unconnected actions without essential connection. Therefore

the play will be broken up into several distinct plays or fragments of plays and unity will be lost. Indeed unity requires that the actions represented should rise one out of another continuously, and in order to this, the time required for the representation should not be very different from what would be required in real life. Therefore the time represented on the stage should not exceed a few hours, or at most a single day. Thus in the case of the Calydonian hunt (*Atalanta*), the hunters assemble soon after daybreak, the killing of the boar occurs before noon and the catastrophe of the play early in the afternoon. In Milton's *Samson* only two or three hours seem to be required.

Thus unity of time is held to be necessary for unity of subject. Shakespeare and English dramatists often assume many years. But they are so far affected by the principle of unity that they usually contrive to make the time seem shorter—thus in the case of *Macbeth* an interval of 15 years passed between his seizure of the crown and his death in battle, but the scenes of the play are made to follow one another so rapidly that the spectator thinks nothing of time. But in *Winter's Tale* Perdita appears first as an infant cast ashore by the sea, and a little further on, she is presented all at once as a young woman. But by rigid classicists unity has been held to require also—

(*c*) *Unity of place*: if the events represented occur in different places involving changes of scene, then there can be no strict sequence or connection between them, so that they will belong to different sequences of events and the unity of the play will be broken. Therefore in a strictly classical play there will be no change of scene. Thus in *Atalanta* all the events represented on the stage occur in the same open space before the temple of Diana, the patroness of Atalanta the huntress. But unity of place may seem less essential than that of time, and some dramatists while adhering to unity of time—limiting the time represented to a single day—have overlooked place and admitted changes of scene; *e.g.*, Ben Jonson.

Thus unity of subject may be considered a condition of excellence in all art, but only critics of the extreme classical school have adhered to time and place. These secondary unities impose on the poets this disadvantage, that though they contribute to *unity* of design, they greatly limit the other condition of artistic excellence, *viz.*, *variety*. They reduce greatly the number of scenes, incidents and characters that can be introduced into plays, and therefore tend to produce uniformity and monotony. But Spanish and English plays have always depended largely on variety of actions and scenes leading frequently to some disregard even of unity of structure,

and have therefore rejected the unities of place and time. Only in a few cases which may be considered experimental merely, has the classical type been strictly followed, as by Milton in *Samson* and by Swinburne in *Atalanta* and *Erechtheus*. But the fundamental principle leads to still another unity which may be called

(*d*). *Unity of tone*: A mixture of tragical and comical elements in the same play is contrary to the real unity and consistency of the play. They suppose and promote opposite tones of mind. Tragedy with its scenes of sorrow and despair, its lofty thoughts and moral teaching, represents the sterner aspects of life, and thereby promotes a serious and thoughtful frame of mind, whereas a cheerful and light-hearted tone is essential to the appreciation of comedy. If the tragical and comical are mixed, these opposite tones of mind will be brought into conflict, and one will tend to destroy the effect of the other, and the mind will be distracted between them. A play should therefore be consistently tragical or comical, but should not combine the two qualities and this rule has been followed in all plays of the classical type.

Many have thought, however, that the gloom of tragedy becomes oppressive and needs to be relieved by humorous speeches and scenes; and these will have no jarring effect if they rise naturally out of the subject and are not

inconsistent with the main purpose of the play. Hence Shakespeare did not accept the rule, but often relieves the gloom of tragedy by humorous scenes as in *Hamlet*. Some have objected to the porter-scene in *Macbeth* as painfully out of keeping with the horror of its context, but others think that it rather deepens the tragic effect of the whole by contrast. Indeed there may appear to have been some inconsistency in the Greeks themselves on this matter. At their great festivals at which plays were exhibited, tragedies were exhibited first, but these were followed immediately by comedies full of the broadest humour (such as those of Aristophanes) and these again were followed by "satyrical" plays which were farces of a still freer character. Thus tragic gravity and comic merriment were allowed to follow in close succession.

Epic element in classical drama:

Another consequence of the unities is employment of the Messenger (angelus) in all classical plays. The number of events that could be represented on the stage was limited by the various unities. Yet in order to understand the events which were represented, it was generally necessary for the audience to know events not represented, but excluded by the unities or other reasons. Thus Aristotle insists that scenes

of horror such as murders should be excluded (*Medea* slaying her children, the sacrifice of *Iphigenia*, and the like). Such things should be made known to the audience only by report. Therefore an *angelus* appears at the critical moment, who has been an eye-witness of the event and can describe it fully to the audience. Such descriptions are often among the finest parts of classical plays (compare the killing of the bear in *Atalanta* in which Swinburne puts forth his greatest descriptive power and the destruction of the Philistine temple in *Samson*). But being descriptions of things from the outside they are of the nature of epic rather than of dramatic poetry, and therefore may appear out of place in a drama; and the necessity of introducing them, may be regarded as a weak point in the classic system.

Lyrical element:

Another characteristic of the classical drama in its original Greek form, though it is not required by the unities, is the choral hymns —the solemn hymns sung by a trained chorus in front of the stage, in intervals between the different phases of the action, giving the drama a semi-lyrical character. This came into the drama from the way in which it originated among the Greeks. It is understood that it

had its beginning in odes to the God of nature, sung by bands of singers and dancers moving round the altar of the god—turning at first mainly on the achievements of the deity, and his services to mankind. See at last for the sake of variety, reciters came forward in intervals of the hymn, and recited with gestures his adventures and mighty deeds. These narrations took on more and more the form of dialogue and action, and became at last successive acts of one continuous story, while the hymn broke up into short songs between the acts, commenting on the story and drawing its moral lessons. Soon secular subjects were introduced, though Greak tragedy retained to its end something of its original religious character—while comedy went in the opposite direction, and soon dropped even the moralising chorus. Thus as the messenger introduced an epic into Greek drama, the chorus introduced a lyrical element and in the choruses of Aristophones, the Greek lyric reached perhaps its very highest level. In the modern classical drama—Italian and French—the chorus was usually dropped. In the few English examples it has been retained with good effect, as in Milton's *Samson* and in Swinburne's lyric dramas *Atalanta* and *Erechtheus*,—though in these latter, the dramatic character is almost concealed by the lyric exuberance of the poet.

Classical style in general:

The classical principle leads also to other consequences bearing on style of composition though these also manifest themselves most clearly in the drama. Thus it will exclude everything that does not contribute to the common purpose of the whole. It will exclude all prolixity and unnecessary repetition and require that everything should be said in the fewest words possible, without circumlocution or repetition. It will exclude all incidents, descriptions and figures of speech which, though they may be beautiful in themselves, do not rise naturally out of the subject and do not contribute to the purpose of the whole—such passages will be what Horace calls "purple patches" (*purpurei panni*) suited only to dazzle and impose on unwary readers. In other words it will exclude Rhetoric.

Coleridge's principle: But the strictness of Aristotle here is not inconsistent with the principle of Coleridge, that a poem differs from a work on science in this: that in a poem every part should not only contribute to the excellence of the poem as a whole, but should at the same time have some beauty and interest of its own apart from the whole; Coleridge knows that if it did not form an integral part of the whole, it

would be only a "purple patch" which would spoil the effect of the whole.

Thus the classical drama is a cross-section of life at some crisis when it is at its greatest intensity, and notwithstanding the brevity and simpicity of plays so constructed, it becomes, in the hands of a master, impressive in the highest degree,—as in the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, the *Samson* of Milton and the lyric dramas of Swinburne. The simplicity of such drama enables it to be viewed as a whole which intensifies the effect; in more complex works the unitary effect of the whole is rather lost by dispersion. And this is evidently the kind of effect which Aristotle cared most for—that of the one whole rather than of the parts by themselves. Indeed he insists on considering a drama as a single action analysed into its constituent parts.

Difficulty of the classical style:

But it is only writers of the greatest power that can use it successfully. In using it they are deprived of the easily utilised advantages of variety of incident, costume and scenery which the freer forms afford. And further, the classical rules are guides only to *form* of construction; they say nothing about the *substance* of the work, nor the way in which it should be

produced—the sources from which it springs. Hence the tendency of the classical drama to poverty in thought and in variety of incidents : characters and speeches come to be too artificial and too like one another. It favours imitation more than originality. The great works of the past were accepted as models to be imitated, and the rules of construction which they seemed to have followed were accepted as laws of universal application, and new works were judged, mainly by their conformity to old rules. Many plays of the French and Italian school seemed to have been put together laboriously according to model and rule from common experience and older authors, as artificial flowers are made with paper and paste. Thus poetry instead of being a product of inspiration, seemed to have become a product of art—of dexterity and patient labour. The ancient maxim says that a poet is born, not made ; but in the classical school poets were not always born poets, but rather made themselves such by study and patient labour. Hence even in France, the classical drama fell into disrepute, and is now rarely followed, except in occasional experiments. Voltaire (who said that Shakespeare was only an exceptionally gifted barbarian because of his neglect of rules) is himself fallen into utter neglect and the barbarian Shakespeare has become supreme.

The classical principle applied to Epic:

Aristotle had before him two of the greatest examples of that form of poetry, *viz.*, the *Iliad* or book of Ilium and the *Odyssey* or book of Ulysses, and a number of lengthy but less regular narratives called the cyclic epics (on different cycles of Greek legend). Aristotle regarded the two Homeric epics as alone worthy of consideration, and from them he drew certain forms of construction which he thought essential to the highest excellence. Drama differs from Epic in this way: Drama gives the deepest representation of life, because it goes deep into human nature, and lays hold of the innermost springs of action and shows how they work themselves out from within in actual life. Epic views and pictures their manifestations from the outside leaving inner motives and characters to be inferred from their outward manifestations. Drama, on the contrary, does not describe but show them working themselves out. The dramatist enters into the hearts of his characters—the epic poet looks at them from the outside as a spectator.

Different forms of epic. The term epic in its widest sense therefore will include all narrative poetry. *Chevy Chase* is an epic as much as the *Iliad*. But it is used more especially for that kind of narrative called "heroic"—*i.e.*, the

systematic narration of some great and critical event which is such as to draw out the heroic qualities of the persons concerned. A heroic epic may also be *national* as when it deals with some crisis in the history of a nation and in so doing brings out the life, character, faith, and aspirations of the nation, as the *Iliad* for the Greek people, the *Æneid* for the Roman, and the *Lusiad* for the Portuguese. Some have thought that Sir Thomas Mallory's prose work called *Morte d' Arthur* (life and death of Arthur) might be considered a prose epic of the British people, but there is a want of connection between its parts and it is too purely fictitious. Shelley thinks that an epic, to be genuine, must be true and sincere in this sense, that it conveys a real and true conception of the life, faith and character of the poet's own people as known to himself in his own time, and thereby makes the only real epics to be the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the *Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost*, because only these exhibit that spontaneous expression of sincere powerful feeling which goes to the making of a true poem.

The classical epic structure.

For the epic, as for the drama, Aristotle lays down or suggests certain *rules of form*, drawn from the great epics of his own country; and

apart from these, critics have held, a poem would not be an epic in the classical sense.

Thus an epic, like every other work of art, must be subject to the principle of *Unity in Variety*. It must have one definite subject and purpose, and a definite beginning and progress, and a *dénouement* in which the purpose indicated at the outset is fully realised (*e.g.*, to exhibit the wrath of Achilles with its consequences, or man's first disobedience with its origin and its result). Everything contained in the poem must serve in some way the original purpose; nothing is to be admitted merely because it is interesting in itself; it must be an integral part of the whole. Nor is this really inconsistent with the principle of Coleridge, mentioned above, that in a poem every part should have some beauty of its own, even when taken apart from the whole, provided that at the same time it contributes to the purpose of the whole. Such passages as the description of Calypso's isle in Homer, of the Elysian fields in the *Æneid*, of the creation of the world, the storm in the wilderness and the review of the armies in Milton, are beautiful apart from the wholes in which they are set but nevertheless each one is subservient to the whole. Epic poets, even more than dramatists, are subject to the temptation to introduce episodes for their own sake alone, but this is inconsistent

with the unity required by the classical epic.

Epic time. Epic unity is subject also to conditions of time, but these cannot be so rigid as in drama. A narrative extending over many years, and divided into parts by intervals of time, would not possess the continuity and connection required in a single work. It would be only a collection of stories like the *Canterbury Tales.* Here, then, epic differs from biography and history. Biography begins with the birth of its subject and goes on to his end, often leaving obscure intervals here and there. A history goes back to the origin of a nation or event, and traces it onward to its end, filling up intervals as well as it can. The epic on the contrary must seize on some event which works itself out in continuous and connected actions and therefore in a short time, leaving no intervals unfilled and obscure. The wrath of Achilles works itself out with all its consequences in 20 or 30 days at most. In *Paradise Regained* Milton restricts himself to the tests by which Christ proved his fitness to regain the lost paradise for men, and these tests occupy only a few days at most. But in some cases, to understand the subject may require knowledge of the events of several years. How is this knowledge to be provided consistently with unity? The poet is tempted to begin at the beginning and

goes right on as the historian does. But Aristotle and Horace advise him "to plunge at once into the heart of his subject" (*in medias res*), without waiting to tell the whole from the beginning. He should fix upon some critical point in the story, in which all the rest is reflected, so to speak,—in which all that goes before is contained in its consequences, and all that follows, in its causes. Then he will find some opportunity of filling in what has been passed over, by way of episode or narrative by eye-witnesses.

Ten years passed between Ulysses's departure from Ilium and his landing at last in his native Ithaca, but Homer does not begin from the beginning of the long story. He begins with the last voyage of Ulysses and his last shipwreck on the island of Phæacia, and gives him an opportunity of telling the long story of his wanderings to the assembled Phæacians in the palace hall of the island. Milton undertook to tell the story of the fall of man, but he did not begin with the primal origin of evil in the jealousy of the angels, but with their final plot for the ruin of man, and makes the good angel Raphael, sent to warn man of his danger, relate to him the earlier part of the story for instruction and warning. The part told by the poet directly may occupy only a few days.

The great epics: Thus Aristotle's rules for the legitimate epic will exclude many long poems from the class. The exclusion by classical critics, of Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* and Camoen's *Lusiad* may be thought arbitrary at the present day. But the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Earthly Paradise* are, both of them, long series of unconnected stories, and the mere presence of the same narrators and hearers is too slender a bond of connection to make them to be epics. The *Morte d' Arthur* (which some have considered to be the true natural epic of the British people) is a series of incidents having no other bond between them than that they all have some connection with the life of Arthur. The *Divine Comedy* is open to question in being a series of incidents. Shelley classes it as one of the great *epics*, because it is the sincere and spontaneous expression of the life and faith of a people by one of themselves. But it is really a long series of incidents, related with much description and discussion, but with little narrative—the only bond of connection being the presence and participation of the witness and narrator—the poet himself. And sufficient reasons are found to exclude such works as *Aurora Leigh*, *The Light of Asia*, *The Epic of Hades*, *The Life and Death of Jason*, and Scott's metrical romances (though more Homeric in their rush and rapidity of movement and

picturesque narration than any other modern poems). In fact Aristotle's rules will reduce the number of heroic epics to the three described in Dryden's oft-quoted epigram :

> " Three poets in three distant ages born
> Greece, Italy and England did adorn," etc.

II

The Romantic Type.

Romanticism : general characteristics :—As the term classical means, having something in the common with Greek poetry of the 5th century B.C., so the term romantic is used to mean, having something in common with the literature of the romance languages of the 13th century A.D. In the former case, the something in common is unity and symmetry of structure ; in the latter case, it is the recognition of some power working in nature other than the physical forces presented to the senses, and making the world to contain wonders and mysteries not subject to mathematical calculation. In the one case therefore, this similarity consists mainly in form ; in the other, rather in substance.

It cannot be said, however, that the literary style and spirit now called romanticism had a beginning at any particular time,—there has always been poetry of that kind. Even the

Greek critic Longinus seems to have cared little for the principles of Aristotle, and to have thought less of the forms of poetical construction than of the substance. To him the source of poety is not laborious art, but impulse springing up spontaneously and elevating the mind to a power of production and expression not otherwise attainable (the elevated or *sublime*). To him as to Wordsworth poetry is the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling," not a product of deliberate art.

19th century romanticism:—But though there has always been poetry written in the romantic spirit, yet towards the end of the 18th century, a movement occurred in that direction which is of special interest in literary history. The classical spirit still reigned supreme in Italy and France, and was making inroads into Germany, and had given rise in England to the long period of imitative poetry produced largely according to model and rule (from 1660 to 1800). A reaction set in in Germany, extended to England and about 1820-30 became supreme also in France. This movement is of interest because it affected not merely the writing of poems and plays, but entered deeply the thought and philosophy of these countries,—then and during the following century, and down to the present day.

The romantic method compared with the classical:—The classical principle had had

regard mainly to the forms in which poetry is expressed and had little or no bearing on the substance of it, or the way in which poetry is produced; and had given rise to a general impression that it is essentially a product of art, working by rules and models. The principle of romanticism is that true poetry is not made by effort of will, nor subject to rules, but springs spontaneously from within the mind by a natural impulse, as the fountain springs from the earth. The poet is one who *sees* more deeply into things than other men, and *feels* more deeply what he sees. The idea of something seen and remembered takes possession of his mind and fills it with strong feeling (be it anger, pity, wonder, gratitude, hope, or any other), and this feeling will not let him rest until he has given it full expression in ideas and words. In other words, the fundamental thought (the semething seen and remembered) excites the poet's feeling, and his feeling makes him think more and more until the fundamental idea branches out into many associated ideas and a system of such contributory ideas is evolved and embodied in language, in which the fundamental idea and feeling are fully expressed and made communicable to other minds—after which the poet is at rest.

And what is most peculiar to the romantic theory is that this process is not a process of

artificial construction carried out by an effort of will on the part of the poet, but a process of evolution which goes on spontaneously in the poet's mind, by an impulse which is not wholly the poet's own but comes from the life of nature itself. The true poem grows as the plant grows; it is not made as the paper rose is made. Something more is concerned in it than the poet's individual will. It is evolved largely by the formative power of nature entering into and working in the poet's mind, and reproducing itself in the poet's will and work.

And as this power of nature impels to thought, it must itself be of a mental kind; so that the theory tends to a spiritual view of nature, as opposed to the mechanical theory then prevailing. Hence the belief which has existed in all ages that the poet, artist, inventor and men of genius in general, work under the influence of a power higher than themselves. And hence it is that we read so often about poetic inspiration, about the Muses, about "the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling"—that "divine frenzy"

"Which ever should possess the poet's mind;"

and which opens up to him a depth of reality invisible to other men, making him see by—

"An orient light unborrowed of the sun,"—
"A light that never was on sea or land."

Even Milton (so classical in some respects) acknowledges the influence of a "divine Urania" who visits him nightly and inspires him with "unpremediated song."

Hence the most expressive definition of poetry from the romantic point of view is that of Wordsworth: "The spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling recollected in tranquillity." The poet sees and comprehends more things than other men, and what he sees makes a deeper impression on his mind. When he has leisure to remember and think, these come back to him in idea; and some one of them excites a strong feeling in his mind which sets him thinking further until the thing with all its relations opens up to him more and more and he sees it in the light of all associated ideas, and feelings, and this whole of thought and feeling spontaneously expresses itself in language; and thus by impulse of natural feeling the poem evolves itself spontaneously in the poet's mind. If will and art enter into the process, they only give clearer expression to thought which comes from a source independent of them. This theory therefore—

Gives a spiritual significance to poetry:—

For a poem thus produced is a spontaneous opening up and self-revelation of truth from within the poet's mind. Indeed, the German romanticists

said, it is an opening up of the mind of the people from whom the poet has sprung and of the time in which he has lived—the natural expression of the spirit of his age. Hence the preference given by critics of this school to primitive and traditional poetry, however rude—traditional ballads, songs, and epics. Such poems are productions not of individual minds so much as those of the people among whom they grew up, and are therefore revelations not merely of individuals but of the collective mind of their country and time. Hence the value attached to the traditional songs of different peoples—Spanish, German, English, such as those collected and translated by Herder in his *Voices of the Nations*; and to collections of German legends by Grimm and Simrock; the *Ossianic Poems*, and English ballads collected by Percy and Scott; and the traditional German epics of the *Nibelungs* and *Gudrun*; and the French *Song of Roland*. The same principle led the critics to prefer the *Lusiad* of Camoens, as a spontaneous expression of the mind, character and aspirations of the Portuguese people, to the far more artistic but more artificial *Jerusalem Delivered* of Tasso and the *Æneid* of Virgil. The *Lusiad*, they said, was a sincere revelation of real life and character; the *Jerusalem* and the *Æneid* described states of things which never existed. For the same reason they raised to a dignified

place in literature even the crude and prosaic Spanish narrative of conquest in South America, called *Los Araucanes*. When Percy ventured to collect and publish the traditional ballads of England and Scotland, classical influence was still at its height in England, so that they were scoffed at by critics such as Johnson; yet they soon found their way in the hearts of the people, and prepared them for the coming romantic literature of Scott, Coleridge, and Byron.

The same principle makes many prefer (in some of its various forms) the Wolfian theory of the origin of the Homeric poems to the older view. If the greater part of what is now the *Iliad* originated in the form of songs and ballads composed and preserved orally, in different parts of Greece, they may be assumed to reflect the minds of the Greek people of their time much more truly than if it be wholly the work of a single mind.

Consequences: Characteristics of Romantic Poetry in general. We can now see what bearing the romantic principle may be expected to have on the criticism of poetry, and see something of the principles which Coleridge would have drawn out from his philosophy of poetry if it had been finished.

1. It will lead to a disregard of all conventional rules and models, including those

of the classical school. Every poet will be free to "strike out a new line" for himself if he can. Keats speaks disdainfully of the French critical legislator, as "a man Boileau," who in his *Art of Poetry* tried to impose a set of fetters on future poets.

Yet it is not inconsistent with unity of form; such forms as are themselves natural and conducive to the expression of natural thought and feeling, will themselves come by nature, and a poem may be romantic in substance and classical in form at the same time.

2. *A deeper feeling of the influence of nature on men* :—The system involves a view of the relation of man and nature which brings the two into closer relation with each other than had been thought of before. Man receives not only his existence but, along with it, his impulses, thoughts and feelings from, or through, nature and nature expresses and seeks to realise its aims and purposes through man.

Hence the interest which Wordsworth and others felt in those people who live in close contact with nature in rural places These continue to be essentially what nature made them to be. Their thoughts and feelings, manners and customs, are inspired by nature. Fashionable life leaves nature behind and becomes artificial and conventional in everything.

"God made the country, man made the town" (a way of thinking undoubtedly natural to Wordsworth though corresponding closely to views previously enunciated by Rousseau). The same feeling doubtless is implicit in the favour shown at all times to *pastoral* poetry, such as the pastoral eclogues of Theocritus, Virgil, Spenser, and Milton (*Aceades*, *Lycidas*) and to pastoral plays such as those of Ben Jonson (*Sad Shepherd*), Fletcher (*Faithful Shepherdess*), Milton (*Comus*) and Ramsay (*Gentle Shepherd*) and many others. At the same time, the tendency to look for meanings and suggestions in things gives romance a special interest in the great crises of history and the vicissitudes of life, as drawing out the deepest qualities of human nature, as shown in the poems and tales of Scott.

3. *A preference for natural as opposed to artificial diction.*—It will favour also that kind of language in which the thought and feelings of the poet naturally and spontaneously express themselves, and will reject whatever is artificial and conventional in expression—such as the "poetic diction" of the 18th century and "euphuistic" and "metaphysical" phraseology of Elizabeth's and James's times. The language in which a poet's thoughts will naturally clothe themselves, will be, it may be assumed,

that of common life—such language as is really used by men.

In language also, therefore, it will have a tendency to go back to people who live in close communion with nature in rural places, as speaking the simplest and most expressive form of speech. Hence Wordsworth's favour for the language of rural people and common life. Why? Because their language was evolved to express the great phenomena of nature and the relations of men with nature. Now this is the deepest and most fundamental stratum of language. Out of it, the language of higher life and learning has been developed by metaphorical transformation—all the so-called higher and more refined and learned words being but "faded metaphors." Therefore the understanding of the "higher" language is dependent on understanding the more primitive and fundamental language of the common rural people. It follows that the thought and feeling of poetry will find more vivid and impressive expression in simple language of common life than in the derivative and second-hand language of artificial society. Hence the controversy regarding the language of poetry raised by the teaching of Wordsworth. It should be observed, however, that Wordsworth in his theory of poetic language, thought at that time to be wildly revolutionary and subversive of established

principles, was only anticipating, by some 50 years, the controversy about the respective merits of the Saxon and Latin styles in more recent times. He was really defending the so-called "Saxon" style against the highly Latinised style of Johnson and most "classical" writers and critics of his century. Yet many critics, Coleridge included, have found fault with him as teaching something altogether contrary not only to established usage (which it was, at that time) but to the true art of poetry.

4. *Gives a new significance to descriptive Poetry.*—It encouraged the introduction of natural phenomena into poetry, but depreciated the treatment of these as merely materials for description. Nature-poetry of the merely descriptive kind had taken a prominent place in English literature of the 18th century, from the influence of Thomson's *Seasons*, and Pope's *Windsor Forest*. But it regarded nature altogether from the outside, and described things and their relations only as they appear to the senses. But its descriptions were picturesque and attractive, and Thomson and his imitators formed an agreeable relief to the satirical and epigrammatic work of Pope and his school which then held the foremost place in poetry. The work of that school consisted largely of imitations of the work of Latin and French satirists though

generally superior to its originals. But this kind of poetry, from its uniformity of subject and style, was beginning to tire the public, and the nature-poetry of Thomson was then new and fresh. But this poetry was superficial, seeing no meanings in the phenomena of nature but describing them only for their own sake, and was often only a picturesque enumeration of things, like a pictorial catalogue. Its influence extended to Germany, and the German critic Lessing wrote a book called *The Laocoon* in which he criticised the descriptive poetry of nature, comparing it to an auctioneer's catalogue of articles for sale! Indeed description, also, however picturesque, soon loses its interest if it suggest nothing beyond itself, *i.e.*, if it find no meaning underlying things—if it suggest no truths of life and thought.

But the tendency of the new school was to *spiritualise nature* and see the *immanence of deity* everywhere. To the poet influenced by the romantic spirit, nature is something other than a conglomeration of things suggesting nothing, and nature-poetry, more than a catalogue. To him nature is full of meaning; things fill his mind with thoughts reaching beyond themselves, and open up depths of wonder and mystery existing behind their outward appearances. To him nature is full of life, actual and potential; it contains the sources out of which his own life

rises, and its influences enter into his own mind and inspire his own thoughts and feelings; and all its phenomena are suggestive and illustrative of the various phases and aspects of human life, and possibilities of life beyond human. Hence his descriptions of nature are never merely for the sake of the physical things described, but for the sake of some symbolical expression or illustration which they give, of some aspect of his own and other spheres of life. To him, life and spirit is always in the background of description and physical nature is only a medium through which the working of spirit is reflected as "through a glass darkly."

The habit of thought underlying the romantic view of nature is well expressed in the lines of Tennyson:—

> Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies,
> Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower, but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is;

and also in the saying of Carlyle that the meanest flower is a window through which you can look into the infinite; and in Wordsworth's lines,

> To me the meanest flower that blows
> Can give thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears;

for he is ever haunted by a consciousness of

> A being that is in the cloude and air,
> And in the green leaves among the groves.

Thus nature to the romantic poet was something very different from what it was to his predecessor.

It is true that the 18th century was not altogether insensible to romantic suggestion. Glover's *Grongar Hill* and Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, and various descriptions in Cowper's *Task* contain much of it; and Collins's *Ode to Evening* and *Highland Superstitions* are full of romantic feeling; and even Gray's *Elegy* notwithstanding some false "poetic diction," contains many lines full of romantic suggestion.

5. Hence a prominent attribute of romantic poetry is its *suggestiveness*. To it, things are full of meanings. These meanings are not exhausted by the words of the poet. But his words are such as to set the mind of the reader working along the same line of thought, and going beyond what is explicitly given in the poet's words,—setting all the latent powers of the mind to work and making all the "chambers of the memory" give up their dead. Indeed it may be said that only a part of the poem is written by the poet. His ideas and words are such as to excite other ideas in the reader's mind and these, others, and so on indefinitely. Hence

some have spoken of the poetic power as infinite, meaning that it inspires trains of thought that have no limit. Hence it is, that so many lines of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats in his later poems (not to speak of Shakespeare) may be said to "vex" the minds of readers

"With thoughts beyond the reaches of their souls."

Thus Keats's picture of "Ruth in tears amid the alien corn;" of the bird whose song

"Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous in fairy lands forlorn;"

Wordsworth's

"Lady of the mere,
Sole setting by the shores of old romance;"

Shakespeare's "Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war," or his "Dark backward and abysm of time"; Rossetti's "Time like a pulse beat fierce through all the worlds;" and Watson's picture of humanity,

"Magnificent out of the dust we came
And abject from the spheres,"

are each a little poem in itself which lingers and expands in the memory; and from such lines we can see that it is this power of suggestion more than anything else that constitutes the "faculty divine."

6. *A new conception of the world.*—Thus the romantic way of thinking leads to (or follows from) a theory of the world entirely different

from that which prevailed in the 18th century. The triumph of the mathematical philosophy of Descartes and Newton had led to a faith in the universal applicability of mathematics, and that led to a conception of the world as a conglomeration of atomic bodies moved by physical forces subject to immutable mathematical laws and therefore to unerring calculation, and this made it to be conceived as a vast system of machinery, working with perfect uniformity in all its parts. And by many, this mechanism was extended to the living organism, and by some even to the working of the mind. Everything therefore worked with unbroken uniformity ; nothing new could enter into the closed system of nature, and nothing could happen which could not be reduced to an algebraic formula, and calculated beforehand. Thus all novelty and variety, all wonder and mystery, were excluded. The nature-poet could do nothing but describe, and one result was the nature-poetry of the century.

The romanticism of the 19th century was to a certain extent a revolt against this mechanical theory of things which substituted something like a death's head in place of the living world of the mediæval and ancient poets. To it the world was still full of spiritual power and life, which manifested itself in all the phenomena of nature, and reproduced itself

finitely in individual minds, evolving in them a higher world of thought and art. The poet, the artist, and every man of creative mind feels its influence working within him and feels that what is highest in his work comes from a source deeper than his own individual will—

"Think you 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking."

Schiller, and Wordsworth especially, expressing their revolt declare that they would prefer to have lived in Pagan times, when it would have been in their power to think of life in all things and find a divinity in every grove, rather than have to accept that death's head theory of things (Schiller's *Gods of Greece*, Keats's *Lamia*, Wordsworth in many places).[1]

The underlying tendency of romantic thought found its first clear expression in Wordsworth's first poem of importance, called *Lines on the Wye above Tintern Abbey*. This poem implies—

(*a*) *A new theory of poetry*: that the true poet is influenced by a power deeper than his own individual will. This power is not exhausted

[1] The rise of the romantic school in Germany was synchronous with a new movement of thought which promised to cast new light on the old mystery of the relation of mind and nature, soul and matter, the idealism of Schelling.

in describing things externally; what is revealed to the senses is the outward manifestation of a power which at the same time reveals itself to his mind inwardly, and he has his "hours of visitation from the Most High God," when "the burden of the mystery of all this unintelligible world" is lightened, and for the moment he becomes a "living soul" in communion with the world-soul, and visions of truth open up to him which are beyond the reach of the outward senses, and for a moment he is enabled to "see into the life of things." And this power of seeing into the inner meanings of things is what gives to his thoughts that power of suggesting other thoughts to other minds, which is so characteristic of the leading romantic poets, *e.g.*, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley.

(*b*) *A new theory of the world:* he can no longer believe that there is nothing in nature beyond the mechanism of physical things as they appear to the senses: he is overpowered by a feeling which comes to him from nature—

> "A sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused.....
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things."

This feeling of a deeper meaning in the phenomena of nature, suggesting the presence in it

of a spiritual power which enters into communion with the finite mind, was wanting, he here gives us to understand, "in the years of thoughtless youth" but has come upon him with overpowering conviction during the five years since he last visited the Wye. But we find from other poems (*e.g.*, *Prelude and Childhood*) that it was present with him from early life.

7. *Yet a place is left for art in poetry*: it may be observed that the chief philosopher of the school, Schelling, gives an analysis of the æsthetic consciousness as understood by the German romantics which has been repeated by Coleridge (in his usual fragmentary way). In the artistic mind, in the act of creation, there are two powers working correlatively. There is (*a*) the power of nature which enters into the artist's individual mind and gives the main direction and substance of his thought, and (*b*) there is the work of the artist's mind working individually, which reacts on the inspiring force of nature, making it resolve itself into clear ideas, and making these develop themselves into a logically connected system of ideas and express themselves in words. Thus by co-operation of these forces—impulse of nature and reaction of the individual will—mainly spontaneous but partly intentional—the poem or work of art grows in the artists' mind.

It follows that harmony of form, though not the whole of poetry as classicists seemed to assume, is nevertheless an instrument and ally of inspiration, *viz.*, as the means of giving the best possible expression to poetic thought.

From this it would appear that the poetic mind is not entirely spontaneous in its work (as Shelley seems to have thought) but that it includes some exercise of the individual will, *i.e.*, of art. The productive force of nature is concerned mainly in the substance of the work —its underlying and pervading thought; and that of the individual, in the *form* of the work and the expression of the thought in words. But they must not be regarded as independent forces, coming into contact with each other from outside; but rather as correlative factors of the same force, combining in working out one common purpose, *viz.*, the evolution of the poem or work of art. Together they constitute *Imagination* which is the creative faculty in all the highest poetry and art.

For Imagination is the power of resolving abstract thoughts and feelings into clear ideas and embodying these in concrete images (description, metaphors, symbols and figures) in which, through the suggestive power of the poet's words, they can be *seen* by the mind's eye and understood without any effort of abstraction—one great difference between science and

poetry being that the former expresses its thought in generalisations and abstractions; the latter, in concrete pictures. Imagination thus gives the poetry of *thought* and truth; Fancy, that of ornament, rhetoric, and mental play. Coleridge calls the work of nature in art primary imagination as inspiring the essence of the product; the work of the individual will, secondary, as merely reducing the essence to form.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the majority of romantic poets, had any such definite theory of the nature of their work. Nevertheless they all felt themselves yielding more or less to a power other than themselves, and felt that there were more things in the world than were dreamt of by the mechanical philosophy, and that in true poetry as well as in art generally, there is "something far more deeply interfused" which that philosophy did not discern.

Therefore the main points in the process of poetical composition are indicated in the lines of Shakespeare—

> The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling
> Doth glance from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth,
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shape and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.

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PART VII.

Harmony and Rhythm of Language: Music of Poetry.

"He who hath no music in his soul cannot be a genuine Poet."

Poetry is an expression of thought (with the feeling rising out of it). A poem has therefore to be considered by the critic from these two points of view: (*a*) he has to consider the thought expressed—the *content*, substance or fundamental purpose and meaning of poem; and (*b*) the way in which the thought is expressed, or the words, description, figures and metres used, and the way in which the different parts of the poem are co-ordinated and harmonised together and made to combine in expressing the thought of the poem. (As this distinction of Content and Form is common to all the arts, German Critics have given them names—the former is the subject of *Content*-Aesthetics, and the latter of *Form*-Aesthetics. Yet, the distinction may be objected to as superficial—content and form are so closely connected in the artist's mind as to be practically identical—the thought makes its own form—the two cannot be treated separately. This was evidently the view of Shelley.)

The subject-matter of poetry and the harmony of the different parts with one another so as to express the thought, have been dealt with above. But there is another kind of harmony which has been referred to only cursorily, *viz.*, the harmony of the effects which the language used produces on the organs of pronunciation and the ear. This kind of harmony constitutes the *music* of poetry—the harmony of the words among themselves.

We speak of the music of language as when we say that the Italian language is musical; and of the music of verse as when we say that the poetry of Shelley is full of music, or that Milton is the 'organ voice of England.' A great critic says, 'No one can be a poet who has not music in his soul.'

What is proposed here is to consider the question, in what the 'music' of language consists, and how it is produced. The first thing to be observed, however, is that the word 'music' in this connection, though universally used, is somewhat misleading. Music appeals to the ear. But what is pleasurable in language is experienced only in a secondary and minor degree by the ear. Language is indeed conveyed from mind to mind through the medium of the ear and the sense of sound; but words have to be produced before they can be transmitted, and it is mainly in the process of producing

the words that the pleasure and displeasure given by language as such, has its origin. Now the production of language is a muscular process which has nothing directly to do with the ear; and the feeling which we call the music of language is mainly muscular, and only in a small degree, aural. It has more in common, therefore, with the pleasure of physical exercises—walking, dancing, riding, and activity in general of the muscular system—than with the pleasure of music proper; and it has been found that many poets who have had the greatest command of verbal harmony and greatest delight in the 'music' of words, have had little or no appreciation of music in the strict sense. Milton was himself an accomplished musician, but Tennyson and Swinburne especially his equals almost in verbal music, have been described as tone-deaf, *i.e.*, without sense of aural music. We *hear* words which we do not ourselves produce; but it is mainly in producing words ourselves (even though we should do so silently) that the pleasure of language is experienced.

How language is produced.—Language is the means of transmitting thought and feeling from mind to mind. But it is "a far cry" from one mind to another mind; and a long series of processes have to be performed, in complexity and subtlety almost beyond power of conception.

How sound is produced.

Thought begins in one person by giving rise to cerebral transformations and nerve currents. These set up contractions and movements of a complicate system of muscular organs in chest, throat and mouth. These muscular contractions pass over into finely modulated waves of atmosphere. These waves flow up the vestibule of the ear and beat on the ear-drum (an elastic membrane closing a hole in the bone). The vibrations of the drum thus produced communicate themselves to a chain of little bones behind it (the hammer bone, the anvil bone and the stirrup bone). The last of these transfers its vibrations to another tight membrane in the bone, and thereby to a liquid contained in the cockle-shell (cochlea) of the ear, and sends waves of liquid pulsing along the winding channels of the shell. These again set certain fibres vibrating (fibres of Corti), and these vibrations affect, in some mysterious way, certain nerve-cells, which send currents of influence along the auditory nerve to a certain region of the brain, and there give rise to a mysterious process in the brain-cells, which is followed or accompanied by the sensation of sound; and the sensation rises into thought; and the thought thus produced in the mind of the hearer reproduces,

or corresponds (approximately) to, the thought of the speaker who began this chain of transformations. This process, therefore, is language.

Which of these intermediate links enters into consciousness? Of this long series of transformations, required for the production of language two sets enter into clear consciousness (apart from the original thought which gave rise to the whole), *viz.*, (1) the muscular processes of chest, throat and mouth which give muscle-feelings of extreme subtlety and complexity, and (2) the sensation of sound which is the last stage of the long series of transformations.

Which of these factors, then, contributes most to that pleasurable consciousness which rises from the use of words, and is often called the 'music' of language? Experience shows that it comes mainly from the working of the muscles which articulate and produce the words. Indeed, the "music" of words is experienced mainly by the reader or speaker of the words, and only in a minor degree by the hearer. Indeed it is clear (from the above sketch) that the feelings rising out of the muscular work involved, will reach the mind of the speaker by a much shorter way than the sound does (after the long series of transformations). For the will and effort to move the muscles is felt in the mind itself from the beginning, and not transmitted to it from

the outside as the sound is. The muscle-processes are made by ourselves directly but the sounds only indirectly, as by other people. In fact the pleasure which the hearer experiences springs more from the tone and timbre peculiar to the speaker's voice, which has little directly to do with the words themselves. It is better, therefore, to use some less misleading word, music. The word 'harmony' serves the purpose best. It comes from Greek words meaning to join different things together in a fitting way.

Hence 'harmony' has come to stand for the effect produced on the mind when a variety of things are co-ordinated together in such a way as to form one consistent whole—a one of many parts. Similarly, the pleasure of language is experienced when a series of muscular efforts of articulation are fitted to each other in such orders and proportions that the articulating energy runs on through the whole series as if they were so many parts of one whole. In short, the pleasure lies in the muscular activity of articulation,—in the rhythm, or unresisted flow of articulating energy from word to word and clause to clause.

How words are differentiated.

How words are produced.—We have to consider further, therefore, how language is

produced, and how the process of producing it gives rise to these agreeable effects which we call the harmony and rhythm of language.

Words and sentences are fundamentally muscular processes, produced by and corresponding to processes of thought. Their use is to embody and transmit from mind to mind, what is thought and felt. In thinking, the various logical factors of thought, as they rise in the mind, join themselves together into a whole of thought, which we call a judgment, which again, fixes itself in a whole of words which we cali the sentence. The words which make up the sentence we classify as substantives, adjectives, verbs, etc., and the whole composed of thought thus embodied in words we call a proposition. We have nothing here to do with the logic of thought nor with the grammar of the proposition, but with the question, how the words are produced, and what feelings the work of producing them gives rise to. This question in its innermost details, to be sure, belongs to physiology and the special science of phonetics. But some consideration of the subject is needed before we can see how the harmony of language is produced, which is a question of literature.

In the first place, how are the words themselves differentiated from one another? Every word is itself a complex of muscular efforts.

To be distinct, it must be composed either of a single vowel and a single consonant, forming one monosyllable, or of several syllables articulated (jointed) together. Now the production of these articulations requires an exceedingly complex and highly sensitive system of muscles in chest, throat and mouth, regulating the passage of the breath, and thereby the vibrations which the breath transmits to the atmosphere for the production of sound. Thus the muscles of the passages may contract so as to modify passing flow of breath in various ways without stopping it altogether, and the air-waves thus produced occasion, through the ear, the various vowel sounds with all their innumerable tones and timbres—including the pure vowel sounds *ah*, *ay*, *ee*, *oh* and *oo* and their almost innumerable intermediates and diphthongal combinations. Or the muscles of the throat, tongue and lips may close sharply and stop the passage altogether for a moment, and, the sudden interruption, or sudden re-opening, will abruptly stop, or start again the current of air and thereby produce the consonants (hard and mute). And this closure of the passage has to take place at different points, and with different degrees of force (*e.g.*, the lips giving *p*, *b*, *f*, the tongue and teeth giving *t*, *d*, *th*, the throat giving *k*, *g*, *ch*). Or the closure may be less complete, and the nearly suppressed current will produce the

liquid, sibilant and aspirate sounds, such as *l*, *m*, *n*, *r*, *s*, *h*, *ch*, etc.

Hence the process of learning to pronounce will consist in learning (1) to produce these movements and compressions and (2) to co-ordinate them together in groups and series, and (3) to fix in memory the order once attained and associate them all together into the one whole of muscular movements which is a word.

Now the muscles concerned in this work of articulation are richly supplied with nerves, and are indeed the most sensitive in the body to slight degrees and forms of effort. Thus the mental power, in order to represent the many modulations and articulations of its feeling and thought, has to make its muscular system produce, in opening and closing the channel of breath in many ways, an almost inexhaustible variety of muscular efforts; and to 'joint' these together into syllables, and these into words, and words into clauses and sentences, expressing all the complexities of its thought. Now mind is distinctly conscious of the work it performs in adapting its muscular apparatus to the expression of its thoughts and feelings, and, evidently, it will be in this work of evolving, controlling and adapting its machinery of articulation to express and convey its thought (*i.e.*, in producing and applying words), that mind will experience what is agreeable or

disagreeable in language—its harmony or discord.

But these muscular efforts, through the chain of intermediate effects described above, produce sounds; and the sounds thus produced are sufficiently complex to suggest to the hearer the muscular efforts which produced them, so that the hearer of the sounds is able to reproduce in his own mind the same muscular articulations (*i.e.*, the language used), and thereby the feeling and thought of the speaker. It follows then that, complex as language is, the muscular elements form its fundamental constituent.

Language a means of thinking, as well as of conveying thought.—And this art of embodying thought in muscular work which is easily remembered and repeated, goes far to make thought itself possible, so that there is reason to believe that the growth of intelligence is largely synchronous with, if not dependent on, that of language. There are many other ways of producing signs and sounds, but no others possess the variety of those produced by the act of muscular articulation peculiar to man. Most animals have the power of producing sounds sufficient to express such elementary feelings as pain and pleasure, fear and hope, but incapable of such differentiation and articulation as are needed to express thought. Hence a very ancient poet was fond of contrasting human

beings with animals by calling them "articulate-speaking men."

Now this work of muscular articulation, being accomplished by contrivance and effort of the thinking mind to embody its thought, is necessarily felt by it as agreeable or disagreeable in various ways; and the agreeable feelings rising out of this work give the harmony or discord of language.

How the feelings of harmony and discord are produced.

What is it, then, that makes the work of articulation to be aggreeable or otherwise—harmonious or discordant? Exercise of the muscles is in itself agreeable, and an essential part of the enjoyment of life. But it consists in the overcoming of resistance, and therefore involves expenditure of energy—hard work. It is so with the activities of articulation. The movements required may be such that the activity flows on without obstruction, from one articulation to another, and the thought is thereby expressed with the least expenditure of energy. But in most cases the muscles concerned, in order to produce the effects required (the articulate sounds), have to resist and press against each other more or less, as in the production of consonantal sounds especially; and articulations have to be combined into syllables, and

syllables into words and series, involving more or less resistance and friction on the part of the muscles. Even vowels may involve some mutual obstruction of muscles, as when they have to be combined in complex diphthongal compounds; or when two come in close succession making "hiatus" (rather common in Italian, where nearly every word ends in a vowel and many begin with one).

But the main difficulty arises when the expression of thought requires the articulation of two or more consonants in one syllable (*i.e.*, without any helping vowel between them). The sudden transition from the one to the other, means that the organs, after being adapted to the articulation of one consonant, have to adapt themselves instantly to the articulation of another, and then another. Thus a labial strains the muscles of the lips, a dental those of the tongue and jaw, a guttural, those of the throat; and sudden transference of effort from one set to another involves more or less difficulty. The complication is greater when one word ends and another begins with several consonants (as in the name 'Park Street,' giving the cluster of 5 consonants, *r*, *k*, *s*, *t*, *r*, in one mouthful so to speak or the German word *Schwartz*, black). This adaptation of the organs, involving the pressure of one against another to make each consonant clear, requires effort, and the greater

the number of consonants that come together the greater the effort.

Quantity.—This is what the ancient metrists meant by the *quantity* of a syllable—the amount of effort (and therefore of time) needed to articulate clearly, and combine the consonants forming a syllable. Some combinations will be easier than others—*e.g.*, those composed partly of liquids, aspirates or sibilants (leaving the channels partly open) will be easier than those composed of mutes, which require the channel to be firmly closed,—while the sudden change from one to another will cause some struggle and strain of muscles involved. Such a syllable therefore will need more time and effort than others : and when a greater *quantity* of time and effort is allotted to one syllable than to others, it may be called a *stressed* or *long* syllable, as opposed to a short and unstressed one. The ancients found the combination of a mute and a liquid to be easy, needing no effort or stress.

Discord.—Thus harshness of language, want of harmony, is mainly due to the frequency of difficult consonantal combinations causing strain and friction of the articulating muscles. The natural way of overcoming such harshness is to make allowance for the real *quantity* of such syllables, *viz.*, by allowing more time and energy to their articulation. This makes the syllable

to be a stressed (or "accented") one. But the established usages of pronunciation (as in most modern languages) largely ignore quantity, lay the stress often on syllables which do not naturally stand in need of it, and require the complex syllables to be hurried (slurred) over. The speaker is required to articulate a whole mouthful of consonants all together, without any additional time and stress. This causes a disagreeable straining of the muscles employed; and when such complex syllables occur frequently without the relief of time and stress, the effect is inharmonious and laborious—the language is *harsh*.

Accent proper.—The words *accented* and *unaccented* are now often used for stressed and unstressed—the stress laid on a syllable is called its accent. But these words are misleading, as their proper meaning is something quite different from stress. The word *accantus* means the *added cantus, i.e.*, chaunt or sing-song—the management of the voice, the various modulations of tone, which are very prominent and important in some languages and dialects, but have nothing to do with stress or quantity (*e.g.*, a London, a Glasgow, an American accent).

How harmony is attained.

If one considers then how harshness is to be avoided, he can now see that it will be

partly (*a*) by such a distribution of stress that stress will fall on those syllables which naturally need it, *i.e.*, such as cannot be pronounced easily without it.

Hence the ancient classical languages of Europe sought harmony mainly by strict adherence to the principle of quantity. They recognised fully the difference between syllables ending in groups of consonants requiring time and labour for clear articulation, and open syllables, and syllables containing only a single consonant (or two easy consonants, such as a mute and a liquid). The difficulty of consonantal syllables was avoided by allowing to such syllables, such time and effort as was naturally needed for their articulation—thereby avoiding so far as possible all struggle and strain of muscles concerned, and allowing the articulating energy to flow on rhythmically from one syllable to another. And the most elaborate system of verbal harmony ever devised, was founded mainly on this principle, which is largely overlooked in modern poetry.

(*b*) Another way of avoiding harshness will be by proportionate distribution of vowels. Vowels may be inserted between consonants where needed, to make the transition easier from one consonant to another. Thus, for example, the harshness of the name 'Park Street'—*r*, *k*, *s*, *t*, *r*—is softened by pronouncing it Park-is-treet.

This kind of adaptation is common in Italian and Spanish, in adopting foreign words. (Thus it can be seen, however, it is only an application of the above principle of quantity.)

Thus harmony will depend considerably on a proportionate distribution of vowel sounds—both of short vowels which make the articulation of the consonants easy, and also of long vowels (or vowels as independent syllables by themselves), which give rest to the muscles and greater prominence to the consonants which follow. It is the scarcity of long vowels and the consequent rapid succession of sharp consonantal syllables, that constitutes *patter*. The French language has been charged with wanting 'accent'—more precisely, wanting a sufficiently prominent difference between long and short syllables, and consequent tendency to patter. It was probably from a feeling of this, that M. Arnold depreciated French poetry so much. A great French writer has disparaged his own northern *langue d'oil* in contrast with the dialects of the south—"*accentuèes et sonores.*" But the great poets have known how to overcome this defect, and to produce metrical effects second to none. Arnold does not seem to have thought of the soaring lines and "*lignes ondoyeuses*" of Hugo and Leconte de Lisle. Swinburne, a far greater master of verbal harmony than Arnold, appreciates them more justly.

(*c*) *Distribution of rests.*—Quantity in language is felt also in the form of *duration*—a form in which it is fully recognised in modern literature. The articulating activity cannot go on without rests or pauses, and the distances between its rests modify the effect of the whole. The principal pauses in articulation are determined by the principal phases of the thought, and are indicated by punctuation (and in verse, by lines and stanzas). But the flow of thought and consequently that of articulation, has phases of a finer kind than those usually indicated by punctuation, and these finer modulations of thought with their pauses in articulation play an important part in the most highly elaborated kinds of harmony, as for example, in the blank verse of Milton and his imitators.

Summary of results: in what does harmony consist?

Therefore the conditions of harmony thus far considered, may be recapitulated under the following heads:

(*a*) *Time for articulating consonantal syllables*—conformity with the principle of quantity. Syllables differ in respect of the amount of time and energy needed for their clear articulation, *i.e.*, in quantity. Some series of syllables allow the activity of the organs to flow on agreeably without obstruction. Others present

combinations which make clear enunciation to be laborious. Harmony requires that, in such cases, more time and energy be allowed, to differentiate the elements (vowels or consonants) from each other, and make each of them distinct in its own place. In other words, harmony requires that such syllables be pronounced as long or stressed. When such relief is not allowed, the reader is required to pronounce a mouthful of letters all at once. Then the syllable is felt to be 'harsh,' and a series of them make the composition to be inharmonious. The difficulty is felt mainly in consonantal combinations, but in some dialects there are also combinations of vowels which are disagreeable to many (*e.g.*, the mewing sound—*ay-ah-oo*—which has become common in some dialects, or the nasal drawl which now often takes the place of the letter r, as when *here* is pronounced *he-ah-ah*).

(*b*) *Distribution of vowels.*—Harmony depends also on the distribution of vowels—short vowels being necessary to the clear enunciation of the consonants, and long vowels giving the relief of variety, and also volume and sonority. An alternation of long and short, stressed and unstressed, made possible by vowel distribution, is essential to rhythm. The German language has many hard combinations of consonants, but the difficulty is much relieved by the alternation of vowel sounds giving a rhythmical succession of long and short, stressed and unstressed, such as seems wanting in French. This perhaps is what gives German such a command of metrical combinations,—which, along with the picturesqueness of its words, makes German the language into which the poetry of other

languages can be translated with least loss—German translations being certainly the best of all.

(*c*) *Distribution of rests.*—The work of articulation needs to be relieved at intervals by rests or pauses, and the proportions between these rests (in respect of time) enter into the feeling given by the whole, and contribute to its harmony. The principal pauses are determined by the phases of the thought, and are clearly enough marked by punctuation. But the stream of thought has phases of a subtler kind than those indicated by punctuation, and is of much importance in versification.

(*d*) *Tone and timbre of the sounds produced—musical element proper.*—The above feelings, it can be seen, are of muscular origin wholly, and yet constitute the greater part of the harmony of language in the purely *linguistic* sense of the word. But combined with this, there is also a purely aural element, or element of music in the literal sense. The contractions of the muscular organs produced atmospheric vibrations, and these affect the ears of the speaker himself and of others and produce sounds, and the sounds are agreeable or disagreeable as such. Nevertheless the strictly musical effect of the sounds depends not so much on the verbal articulations—language proper—as on peculiarities of the speaker's voice and the hearer's ear, and these have nothing directly to do with words spoken. The melody of a song depends but little on the words sung; "God save the King" is much the same musically, in whatever language it is sung. The tone and timbre of the speaker's voice are like those of the singer or musical instrument—an accompaniment, not

a part of the language itself. Yet there is a connection between real music and language. A singer prefers a song in which the words are themselves linguistically harmonious, to one full of discords. Hence the preference which singers show for the Italian language. Its freedom from difficult consonantal combinations, its long open vowels, and rhythmical alternation of long and short, makes the syllables follow one another "trippingly," and leaves the singer free to think more of the music and less of the labour of articulation.

(*e*) *Clear expression of thought and feeling.*—Further, there may be obstruction to the flow of thought as well as to that of articulation. The use of language is to express thought, and there cannot fail to be a feeling of dissatisfaction when the thought is not adequately and naturally expressed. In other words there will be a harmony between the language and the thought, and this kind of harmony will combine with the other forms into one whole. This intellectual shade of harmony will be felt most in connection with poetry. In the most perfect kinds of composition, the thought and the words are so blended together that not a word can be changed, without disturbing the effect of the whole fabric. Hence the "vanity of translation" (Shelley) in the case of poetry.

Hence we may conclude that the harmony of language includes muscular, musical and intellectual forms of feeling. But the most fundamental and important is certainly the muscular.

Difference between ancient classical and modern metres.—The importance of quantity as

a factor of harmony is best illustrated by reference to the metrical system of the ancient Greeks which was founded wholly on quantity, and which has had great influence on modern thought on the subject. It was based wholly on that kind of harmony which results when time and stress fall on those syllables which naturally need them, *i.e.*, on vowels naturally long, and on combinations of two or more consonants which require more time and energy for their clear articulation than simple syllables do. Trying to force the organs to articulate such combination all at once, is discord. Trying to dispose of a long vowel in the same time as a short one gives a disagreeable feeling of effort and failure The ancients founded their system on the principle of complete agreement between the articulative effort put forth and the natural requirements of the syllable (together with the other principle that the movements of articulation should be in harmony with the thought and feeling—that the sound should be an echo to the sense). Hence the softness and easy flow of syllables generally attained by them.

Modern metrical practice differs in this : it is founded on what is called 'accent' (used in a sense which has nothing to do with accent in the original sense of the word). It assigns stress conventionally to certain syllables without regard to their natural quantity ; *i.e.*, stress is called "accent," and is fixed artificially without regard to the harshness which results from trying to pronounce complex syllables as if they were simple ones. This is not so much felt in prose where harmony is not expressly aimed at, but it is a difficulty which the poet feels and does his best to overcome (*e.g.*, Milton).

II.

Devices for attaining verbal Harmony: Versification.

But the harmony of language has to be considered under the two forms under which language is used, *viz.*, prose and verse.

Harmony in Prose.

Prose rhythm.—The speaker and prose writer think mainly of finding words to express his thoughts. Their words may fall into series which are more or less harmonious, but this is in most cases by chance merely; they do not think of the rhythm of the words they are going to use. But in some minds the association between thought and language is so close, that harmony of thought passes spontaneously into harmony of language; and their language becomes rhythmical,—a "long majestic march and energy divine"—probably without any effort or intention of their own. Such harmonies occur frequently,—as has often been pointed out—in the prose of Sidney, Milton, Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne, and more recently in the works of De Quincy and Ruskin. Prose harmony has been treated fully by Prof. Saintsbury in his work on *Prose*

Rhythm. The following may be taken as example of prose rhythm :

But man | is a noble | animal | splendid in | ashes and | pompous | in the grave | solemni | zing nativ | ities | and deaths | withe | qual | lustre | nor omit | ting cer | emonies | of bra | very in | the inf | amy of | his na | ture.

Here the pleasing flow of the voice through anapaests and dactyles with occasional iambuses, trochees and tribrachs, is unmistakable, and discordant combinations in weak syllables are avoided.

Harmony in Verse.

But harmony of language is a need too strongly felt by many minds, to be left wholly to chance. Consequently an art has been devised to supply the need. This is the art of versification (if it can justly be called an art—some say that it is not art but nature).

Why should poetry be in verse? *What is a poem?* Much has been said about the use of versification; why should so much poetry be written in verse? Verse is certainly not necessary. Poetry is the expression of a certain kind of thought and feeling, and the simple

and direct way of expressing thought, even when poetical, is by prose, and poetry consists essentially in the thought expressed and not in the way of expressing it. And it is not to be denied that much good poetry is to be found in prose form. Why then should it be put into verse? Various reasons have been suggested, but the simplest one is sufficient in itself: poetry is harmony of thought; therefore its most suitable expression is harmony of language. A poem consists of one fundamental idea developing itself into a system of related ideas, and making all these contributory ideas harmonize (co-operate as it were) with one another and with the fundamental idea, in such a way as to form one organic whole of thought and feeling—one complex harmony—as in music all the tones are so co-ordinated as to combine in giving expression to the fundamental *motif* of the piece. Therefore in poetry the versification adds the supplementary harmony of language enhancing and completing the fundamental harmony of thought and feeling of which the poem is the embodiment. When a poem is sung, the music of the voice and instrument supplements and reinforces the harmony of the language, giving deeper expression to the thought and feeling of the poem. This is the music of poetry Carlyle was fully justified in describing poetry as music,

though he had himself but little feeling for real music. Poetry will indeed be music if we may use the word in a comprehensive sense to include the complex harmony of ideas and emotions, muscular feelings of articulation and aural sensations, all co-operating towards the one ultimate purpose of the poem. Nor need external accompaniments of song and instrument be considered wholly adventitious. External music may be in such harmony with the fundamental idea and feeling of the poem as to bring them out even more effectively than the words do. Hence the Greeks regarded vocal and instrumental music as an essential part of the poetical drama. And hence the modern opera and oratorio.

Versification, then, is an art which makes the language of a poem more harmonious in itself, and therefore more in keeping with the harmonised thought and feeling of which the poem is the embodiment. And this will be accomplished by carrying out to the utmost the conditions of harmony referred to above, making such an arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables and distribution of rests as will promote a rhythmical flow of articulating activity without friction or obstruction;—making the effect of the whole to be more expressive. And the form of the metre and verse should be (so far as possible) such as to harmonize

with and reinforce the fundamental idea of the poem.

Ancient methods of describing verses—feet, metre, numbers.—Therefore it was found convenient to mark the different harmonious combinations of stressed and unstressed, long and short syllables, and call them feet or metres (measures); and to mark the main rests in the flow of articulation (which are at the same time distinct series of feet) by dividing it into lines (numbers). It was found also that harmony can be further promoted by making the same series of feet, and clauses of the same length (lines), recur periodically, making strophés or stanzas.

Thus versification was founded originally on the quantity of syllables measured by time and stress. Stress fell on those syllables which could not be easily articulated without it—consonantal syllables which naturally required more time for distinct articulation. Modern languages have found it convenient to adopt a conventional system of stress by which stress is allotted to syllables, generally, without regard to their natural complexity and difficulty. This conventional distribution of stress was called accent, though that word originally meant something quite different, *viz.*, modulation of voice. This led to the introduction of rhyme.

Introduction of Rhyme.—This comparative effacement of real quantity as the main source of

poetic harmony, made it necessary for poets to find a substitute. The varying proportions of feet and clauses as fixed by conventional accent merely, was not a thing to impress itself sufficiently on the majority of hearers and readers; something was wanted which would make the difference between verse and prose sufficiently obvious to all. Now there was something naturally striking and pleasing in the periodical repetition of the same articulations. Such repetition was found in alliteration or recurrence of the same consonant at the beginnings of words, and this was adopted as the main distinguishing mark in early English and Norse poetry, and is still resorted to occasionally for particular effects (as, *e.g.*, by Swinburne especially). Assonance, or recurrence of the same vowel in the last syllable of successive lines (every stitch in time saves nine) was adopted in early Spanish poetry. But these artifices were not sufficiently obvious, and came to be regarded as barbarous or childish (as they were by the ancients). Therefore after a time they were completely superseded by "a jingle of like endings" too obvious to be missed by any ear, *viz.*, rhyme—the repetition of the same syllable (at least one vowel and one consonant) at the ends of lines. These repetitions could be arranged in various orders—successive in couplets, alternate in quatrains, octaves, etc., and

could be adapted to lines of various lengths. To be sure, rhyme was useless apart from the older harmonies of stress and rest; but supplemented them agreeably, and yielded a new kind of harmony obvious to all. Indeed in some languages, *e.g.*, French, verse has been found impossible without it.

Revival of unrhymed verse in Italy, England and Germany.—Nevertheless the ever-present examples of the ancient purely quantitative metres, with their variety of refined harmonies without rhyme, led some to regard rhyme as an extraneous addition to verse—"a vulgar artifice to conceal badness of metre and poverty of thought." Therefore blank verse of a kind was soon resorted to by English play-writers, at first in its easiest form—the usual 10-syllabled iambic line with the pause at the end. Though Marlowe produced many "high-stepping" lines in this form, it was soon felt to be too facile, and also too monotonous. Fletcher and Shakespeare (in his later plays) introduced the art of varying the numbers by pauses within the lines connecting one line with another (called *enjamáement*). And afterwards Milton adopted this method in his great epic, but improved upon it and elaborated a versification founded on accent (and quantity, as far as possible) and numbers (clauses of different proportion) and produced metrical effects beyond the reach of

rhyme. Rhymeless verse has been attempted in lyrical poems also, but with less general acceptance—the best examples being Milton's translation of a small ode of Horace, Collins's Horatian *Ode to Evening*, and Arnold's *Rugby Chapel* (in a *quasi*-glyconic metre suggested perhaps by Goethe), and some highly successful short pieces by Tennyson. These fine poems have the unavoidable defect that the stress required by the language (accent) does not coincide always with the natural quantity of the syllables, entailing some harshness. But in the hands of such masters of harmony as these, the defect is not greatly felt.

The strophé form: choral hymn and ode.—The highest effort of Greek lyrical poetry was the choral hymn, which consisted of several metrical paragraphs called strophés (turnings, from the backward and forward movements of the chorus) composed of lines of different lengths and metres, varied in keeping with the varying thought and feeling of the poem—the marching and dancing movements of the choir also being in keeping with the quantitative movements of the verse. English poets have often adopted this strophic form of varying paragraphs though without the music and movements of the ancient chorus. Poems of this form have usually been called *Odes* (though not often really such, as the ode is properly

a lyrical address to some one, like the odes of Horace). But, along with their accentual (or imperfectly quantitative) metre, they have always adopted rhyme. Indeed some of the highest efforts of English poetry are of this (originally) choral form (though not usually meant to be sung by choruses like the Greek hymn), *e.g.*, Dryden's and Pope's poems on *St. Cecilia's Day*, Gray's *Poesy*, Collins's *Passions*, Coleridge's *France* (often pronounced the best English *ode*), Wordsworth's *Childhood* and *Lycoris* and Tennyson's *Wellington* and *Lotus Eaters* (see various collections of '*Odes*').

The stanza.—But most poets, not aiming at things so high as the choral hymn, prefer short stanzas of rhyming lines constantly recurring in the same form—the iambic being the favourite foot in the modern languages, though in English and German the anapaestic is occasionally used.

Spenserian.—Among the stanzas used in English, the most remarkable is that invented by Spenser—a stanza of 9 rhyming lines (two iambic quatrains followed by a hexameter), but with the rhymes so intertwined as to have the unity of a stanza. Such complex and lengthy stanzas might appear unsuitable for narrative poetry, each being a little whole in itself; but Spenser and Byron have

succeeded in giving them the continuity of narrative.

The sonnet and its conditions.—An example of a strophé or stanza used as a separate poem, is the sonnet. Its form of 14 lines, rhyming always in nearly the same way, might seem arbitrary and artificial. Why 14 lines, and why always these rhymes? What peculiar merit does this combination possess? Is it altogether arbitrary? The explanation is to be found in the origin of the poem. The mediaeval Provencal and Italian versifiers tried all different forms of verse-making; among others, they tried to make forms of verse which would correspond to movements and to music (as in the ancient chorus). Our ballad was originally the ballata (ballade)—a combination of lines and rhymes adapted to dance-music (see imitations of French *Ballades*, etc., by Lang, Gosse and others in a volume of the Scott Library and Rossetti's Ballade of *Dead Ladies*). Similarly, the sonnet was meant to be an imitation in verse of a short piece of music (sonata, sonetto—diminutive) in which the sounds went on accumulating for a moment and then died gradually away in a dying close, like echoes in the distance. This rising of the sound to full blast was reproduced, it was thought, by the rhymes, *abba, abba*, and its dying away, by the echo-like repetition of the same rhyme in

6 closing lines, *c d, c d, c d* (compare the echo in Tennyson's poem, "*The splendour falls*"). But the sonnet is for these reasons a difficult form, and is not always entirely successful. To attain its purpose fully it must be such that it can be read and grasped easily as one whole, by both mind and ear. For this purpose, the thought should be such as can be quickly comprehended without effort; in the otherwise finely constructed sonnets of Rossetti and Swinburne the thought is often so abstract as to make them heavy reading. For the same purpose, the lines have to be mostly end-stopt, otherwise the poem is in danger of being broken up into shapeless pieces—its unity lost—(a fault of the otherwise fine sonnets of Mrs. Browning). (This license is used, however, with good effect in some sonnets of Milton.) Compare the returning echo at the end of his sonnet on the *Massacre in Piedmont*. The effect is lost also when the original arrangement of rhymes is too far departed from. Shakespeare wrote many fine poems in 14 lines, but they consist merely of 3 separate quatrains followed by a couplet, so that the rhymes characteristic of the sonnet were entirely wanting; and the poems might as well have been of any other number of lines. It is the peculiar rhythm that makes the sonnet, and the rhymes that make the rhythm. The sonnet suffers also when the

poet closes it with a couplet. This breaks the flow of rhymes, and thereby the unity of the poem; and affects the reader somewhat as the sudden putting on of the brake does, when a carriage has been moving rapidly. This is perhaps the only fault to be found with the sonnet on *Night* by Blanco White, commonly pronounced the best in English. In Italian, German and French sonnets these conditions are observed universally. In England Milton and Wordsworth have adhered most fully to the conditions of the sonnet, and brought its full effect most successfully.

Ottava rima.—Another lengthy and rather difficult stanza is the *octave rhyme* taken from the Italian language in which rhyming is easy. The rapidly running rhymes and the final couplet, affording an opportunity for some closing commentary—jest or epigram—make it suitable for humorous composition. Hence it was used in the humorous epics of the Italians (Boiardo, Pulci, Ariosto, Berni, etc.) and was adopted from them by Byron, and used by him with extraordinary dexterity in his humorous poems on which his reputation as a poet mainly rests.

Harmony between style and subjects.

General harmony between style and subject: Milton and the "grand style."—The above are

the most prominent forms of harmony which enter into the making of poems. But there is another kind which is more difficult to define and describe. In great poems we expect to find a general correspondence between the style of the poem as a whole and the fundamental feeling and purpose of the poet. Milton took up the most serious and elevated subject that could be undertaken by any man. It was to be expected, therefore, that the style of his work as a whole would be in harmony with the "high seriousness" of his subject—that it would be pervaded throughout by a tone of solemnity and grandeur—in short that it should be in the "grand style," such as that in which Homer celebrated the traditional heroes of the Greek race, and Virgil, the grandeur of Rome. Milton aimed at this, and it is generally admitted that he was successful. He considered the modern art of rhyme to be an extraneous ornament, too trifling and artificial for the dignity of his subject, and adopted a style of blank verse which had the iambic pentameter for its basis, seeking variety occasionally by the introduction of other feet, but mainly by an artful distribution of clauses by means of pauses and rests. These had the effect of supplementing the fundamental pentameter movement by a variety of other numbers—8-syllabled (of which he seems rather fond),

6-syllabled, 4-syllabled and others (see examples). Such variations on the fundamental metre were usually fitted specially to the thought of the passage, and gave to his composition additional expressiveness, as well as dignity and variety. Many have used pentameter blank verse besides Milton, but none has succeeded in drawing from it the same "organ harmony" which Milton has drawn (apart, perhaps, from a few short passages which Wordsworth has dropt here and there, apparently without intention).

Wordsworth and the 'popular' style.—Wordsworth's purpose in general was to remove from poetry the artificial ornaments and inflated verbiage with which it had come to be vitiated and to show that the highest poetry could be, and would gain by being, expressed in the language of common life, duly refined. Why? Because poetry, he said, was not anything artificial, but was the natural expression of those kinds of thought and feeling which are deepest and most essential in human nature. It should therefore be expressed in no artificial 'poetic diction,' but in the language which is most natural to human beings. Hence he has tried to give expression to the deepest thought in a style of homely simplicity.

Byron and the cynical style.—Byron was successful in giving his whole poem of *Harold* an atmosphere of gloom and despondency in

keeping with the feeling of world-sorrow, or disappointment with the world, which he meant to express and which runs as a lyric element of feeling through the work. In this he was aided by the Spenserian stanza which certainly lends itself to lyric feeling more than to narrative; but more specially so, in making the Italian octave, with its fitness for banter and epigram, jest and sneer, expressive of the contempt which he affected for the world and everything in it.

Scott and the rapid style.—A good example of harmony between style and thought is to be found (descending perhaps into a lower sphere) in the poetry of Scott. Scott was a cripple, and his own power of movement was limited. Yet in his own mind he lived a life of restless action and he has put this into his poems, for the style of his poems expresses as well as could be, the rush and tumult of active life, the rapture of strife and struggle. Contrasting his own style with the more restful style of Jane Austen's tales, he wrote, "I myself can do the light cavalry style" This description is humorous to be sure, but nothing could describe better the rush of action which pervades all his poems. Wordsworth took up a similar subject in his *White Doe*, but meant to express, not the glory of action, but the sadness and pity of misfortune and despair and the style is in keeping with this motive.

III.

Illustration.

What has been said above about metres and especially the difference between the ancient purely quantitative and the modern "accentual" forms requires some illustration by examples.

Attempts to revive ancient metres.

No attempt need be made here to exemplify the purely quantitative metres of the ancient classics. But we must notice the attempts that have been made to adapt one ancient metre in particular, *viz.*, the dactylic and spondaic hexameter or six-feet line to modern accentuation. Of the six feet, it will be noticed, the two last are uniformly dactyle and spondee; the preceding four may be either dactyles or spondees according to the poet's choice, or sense of fitness. This revived metre was at one time very popular in German; (e.g. Goethe) the most notable example in English is Longfellow's *Evangeline*.

Hence; the iambic system having become almost universal some have thought it possible to introduce variety by reviving the classical hexameter line under modern conditions. The charm of that measure lay in the variety of its, gliding, heaving and rolling movements (so to

speak—Lang writes of "The surge and thunder of the Odyssey"). This effect was made possible by adherence to the principle of quantity, which excluded the jarring obstructions of consonants in weak syllables. The attempts, however, has not been altogether successful.

The difficulty arises from the modern indifference to quantity of syllables in its proper sense, and the substitution of a conventional "accent." In this way stress is made to fall on syllables which could easily be pronounced without it, while complex and difficult syllables have to be slurred over without time to articulate them clearly and such obstructions to the flow of voice requires a disagreeable effort on the part of the reader. The following lines are modern hexameters in which the stress is fixed by conventional accent, and not determined by the nature of the syllables themselves. Hence some difficult syllables have to be hurried over without stress, and make some lines harsh and difficult to read.

The epigram of Coleridge may be first quoted as affording a favourable example of classical metre in English

In hex | ameter | rises the | fountain's

silvery | column

In pen | tameter | aye | falling in | melody |

back

Here the only faults against quantity are the *r r* in the first line, and the *n m* in the second line, both in unstressed syllable; but, being liquids, they give little or no difficulty so that the lines are fairly correct examples of classical metre.

The difficulty will be better seen from the following lines taken from *Evangeline*, the most successful English poem in classical hexameters:

1. This is the | forest pr im | eval. The |
murmuring | pines and the | hemlocks
2. Bearded with | moss and in | garments |
green indis | tinct in the | twilight
3. Stand like | Druids of | old with | voices | sad
and proph | etic.
4. Stand like | harpers | hoar with | beards
that | rest on their | bosoms.
5. Loud from the | rooky | caverns the | deep
voiced | neighbouring | ocean.
6. Speaks and in | accents dis | consolate |
answers the | wail of the | forest.

Here the reader feels the following difficulties especially. In line 1, the metre requires that the syllable *est pri* be pronounced short, as also the *pri* of primeval, and also the *ing*. In line 2, *with* before *moss* and especially the first two syllables of *indistinct* are difficult to pronounce without stress. Line 3 is correct quantitatively except for the complex *and pr* near the end. Line 4 is meant to be spondaic wholly and there is no great difficulty in pronouncing '$\overline{\text{harpers}}$' and '$\overline{\text{hoar with}}$' as spondees; but we feel some difficulty in pronouncing '*on their*' as unaccented syllables. Line 5 comes near to a good hexameter; the difficulty of pronouncing *omth* and *erns* as shorts is not very great, nor that of making $\breve{\text{rocky}}$ a spondee ($\overline{\text{rockee}}$) as metre requires. Line 6 is a sonorous line, but its effect is impaired metrically by the harshness of pronouncing '$\overline{\text{accents}}$ $\overline{\text{dis}}$ | $\overline{\text{consolate}}$' as two dactyles.

Such examples show that some degree of harshness is inseparable from the modern 'accentual' system, and this is made especially obvious by attempts to revive the ancient metrical system under modern conditions (as by Longfellow, Clough, Kingsley, and others). But still such objections may be pressed too far. We have less difficulty now-a-days in taking a

mouthful of consonants. *Evangeline* especially has shown that even the 'accentual' hexameter, in spite of occasional harshness, can be used with much expressiveness and much dignity; and it is rather to be regretted that recent poets have passed away from it entirely, and limited themselves to the ubiquitous iambic. Does not the reader find in such lines as above some relief from the monotony of the iambic?

Indeed it is this same difficulty that has led to the almost universal use of the iambic metre, in modern languages. In disyllabic feet the clash of consonants is less felt. But in reading the anapaestic and dactylic metres sometimes attempted we strike on clusters of unstressed consonants which make us feel as if jolting over a stony road.

Coleridge in *Chrystabel* invented a peculiar metre—a combination of iambus and anapaest—which has been much admired, and was imitated by both Scott and Byron. The trochaic metre has been used but sparingly (the chief example being *Hiawatha*)—seeming to be suited mainly for playful compositions.

Milton's Theory of Metre.

What has been said above about the metre of Milton also needs some illustration. His

familiarity with the ancients led him to think that verse is possible without rhyme. "Rhyme is a thing of itself, to all judicious ears, of no real musical delight, which consists in numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one line into another, not in the jingling of like endings." The true "musical delight" therefore, the genuine harmony of poetry, consists in a succession of syllables of various quantities fitted together in varying proportions (feet) and in systems of varying numbers (clauses and lines) so adapted as to harmonize with the sense expressed. He took the ordinary iambic pentameter, established in use by Chaucer long before, but rejected rhyme, and adopted the method of placing his pauses in such a way as to produce a variety of subordinate numbers, under and in harmony with the fundamental pentameter. In this way he often produced metrical effects which would have been impossible had he adhered to rhyme. A few examples will illustrate the meaning of this. (The actual placing of the rests may depend sometimes, however, on the taste of the reader.)

High on a throne | of royal state || which far
Outshone | the wealth of Ormus | and of Ind ||
Or where the gorgeous east | with lavish hand |
Show'rs on her kings | barbaric pearl and gold ||
Satan exalted sat | by merit raised.

It may be observed that the first two lines contain two 8-syllabled measures (tetrameters), *viz.*, "High on a throne of royal state" and "the wealth of Ormus and of Ind," and these seem to give the lines their extraordinary dignity. Milton seems to have been fond of this tetrameter combination and uses it freely (Virgil is addicted to a somewhat similar division in his lines.) One may feel some quantitative difficulty with the first two words of line 3; "or where" seems to be a light trochee (Or where), but 'where' is naturally a long syllable, and 'or,' a light one. The partial assonance in the last words of the second line adds to the effect.

As when the potent rod |
Of Amram's son || on Egypt's evil day ||
Wav'd round the coast || up-call'd a
pitchy | cloud
Of locusts || warping on the eastern wind ||
That o'er the realm | of impious Pharaoh || hung
Like night || and darken'd all || the
land of Nile.

This passage falls largely into the 8-syllabled measure (8 or 9) of which Milton is so fond. We may observe the emphasis given, by their peculiar position, to the three syllables 'hung like night.'

On the shore |
Of that inflamed sea | he stood ‖ and call'd
His legions ‖ angel forms | who lay entranst ‖
Thick as autumnal leaves ‖ that strew the brooks
In Vallombrosa ‖ where th' Etrurian shades ‖
High over arch'd | embow'r ‖ or scattered sedge
Afloat ‖ when with fierce winds | Orion
arm'd ‖
Hath vex'd the Red Sea coast ‖ whose
waves o'erthrew
Busiris ‖ and his Memphian chivalry.

In this paragraph the fundamental pentameter rhythm seems lost sight of for a time, and shorter measures, especially 8-syllabled and 6-syllabled, substituted. But it is so carefully composed that not a syllable is out of place; and most clauses are formed so as to give special emphasis to their fundamental ideas, *e.g.*, 'he *stood*' and '*call'd* his legions,' 'o'erthrew *Busiris*.'

Nothing shows better the superiority of Milton's blank verse over rhymed lines for some purposes, than the lines in which he describes the final fall of man :—

Earth felt the wound ‖ and nature | from her
seat
Sighing ‖ through all her works | gave signs
of woe ‖

Earth trembl'd from her entrails | as again
In pangs || and nature gave ¦ a second groan ||
Sky lowr'd || and muttering thunder | some
sad drops
Wept || at completing of the mortal sin |
original.

Here much of the effect depends on the emphasis given by the metre everywhere to the fundamental ideas, *e.g.*, 'from her seat *sighing*' 'again in *pangs*' 'some *sad drops wept.*' The grandeur of the passage would have been lost in rhyming lines; and also in too close adherence to the fundamental pentameter rhythm.

But the question may be asked: if the rhythm depends so much on the clauses contained in the lines, why should not the clauses themselves be written and printed as lines? Why print long lines which are lines to the eye only, and not to the ear? Southey must have thought of this when he composed his *Thalaba.* He wrote that poem in rhymeless lines of unequal lengths, corresponding, he thought, no doubt, to the clauses of Milton. But Southey's lines have little or no harmony. He afterwards thought to improve on the system in the *Curse of Kehama,* by adding rhyme. But the improvement was not very obvious. It seems that the effect of the clauses is felt most when they are thought in the closest relation to each other and to the

funadmental line; the magic is lost when the thought is drawn out into separate lines.

Criticisms of Dryden and Johnson. Why did Milton write P. L. in blank verse?—Milton in his foreword to *P. L.* had referred to rhyme as "that troublesome bondage of rhyming"—meaning clearly that, while of little value in itself, it diverted the poet's attention from a more refined kind of harmony. But both Dryden and Johnson accepted this as an admission that he could not compose in rhyme without difficulty—in short, that he had not written *P. L.* in rhyme because *he could not.* Dryden assures us that Milton's rhymes are "constrained, and forced, and come hardly from him." Johnson says of *Lycidas* that "the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, the numbers unpleasant!" No one could say this now-a-days. Dryden, to be sure, wrote many "mighty lines," but on the whole Milton's own criticism of rhyme that it is (too often) a disguise for poor thought and bad metre, would not be altogether inapplicable to much of the work of the poets who thus depreciated his work. It may be true that Milton could not have written *P. L.* in rhyme, but for a reason quite different from that which Johnson was thinking of (*viz.*, inability to make rhymes) —*viz.* for the reason that the variety, grandeur and dignity which Milton thought essential to his subject, would have been impossible in rhyme.

Results : Music of Poetry.

Poetry being an expression of truth, the reader and critic have two things to consider, *viz.*, the truth expressed and the way of expressing it—the substance and the form. In respect of form, the excellence of a poem may be said to consist in the harmony of all parts. And harmony here includes harmony of structure and harmony of sound.

But what we here, for convenience, call harmony of sounds or music, includes two different things, *viz.*, harmony of muscular articulations, and harmony of ear-impressions which gives music in the strict sense; but the most important element in verbal music is certainly the harmony of muscular efforts in articulation, and to attain this is the main purpose of versification.

PART VIII.

The Principles of Criticism as applied to Poetry.

The word *criticise* means literally to take asunder the different parts of which a thing is made up. Hence it has come to mean distinguishing the different parts and qualities of a thing with a view to determine whether it is fit or not fit for the purpose for which it is intended and presented.

Thus to criticise a new political measure means to distinguish all its contents and implications, and consider whether they are likely to produce the advantages to the public which have been claimed for the measure. To criticise a new work in science or philosophy means to distinguish the various principles laid down, or results arrived at, and consider whether they follow logically from their premises, and are consistent with truth already established, and whether they contribute anything new to the advancement of knowledge. To criticise a work on history is to show whether it presents to the mind clear pictures of the events of a period and the causes which led to them, and whether its details are based on sufficient evidence, and may be relied on as a contribution to our knowledge of the past. To criticise a work of fiction means to show whether the events described follow naturally from the circumstances

assumed at the beginning, and whether the characters are true to life, and whether the whole is sufficiently new in substance and clear in statement to satisfy the reader, and form a genuine contribution to our understanding of life and character.

What is proposed here is to deal with criticism of poetry. What is the meaning and use of criticism of poetry? But in dealing with poetry the word has been used in a rather vague and comprehensive way. Hence we have to consider

Different uses of the word criticism.

Thus we read of the *historical* criticism of poetry which will mean studying the history of the poet's time, to find how his mind and works were affected by political and social events, as Masson has done in his *Life of Milton.*

We read also of *psychological* criticism, which will consist in examining an author's works with a view to discover from them his intellectual and moral character—assuming that the nature of the poet is to be found embodied in his works. Thus many attempts have been made to discover, from Shakespeare's works, his character and endowments as a man. It has become a fashion in recent times to think that men of genius have often a strain of insanity in their nature; hence the critic may ask whether there are any traces of this in the poetry of Byron or Shelley.

We have heard also of *biological* criticism. The critic may study the race and family, the country, climate and general environment of an author, trying to show that the character of his works is determined largely by race and physical environment—the theory applied by Taine to explain the characteristics of English litterateurs. This is opposed to the view of Carlyle, Wordsworth and many others, that genius comes directly from the spiritual ground of nature, and is not a product of physical and social environment, as so many have assumed.

We hear also of the *comparative* criticism of poetry. This will consist in comparing works of the same class, by different authors living in different times and countries, and pointing out the differences of thought, method and purpose characteristic of them, and illustrative of their times. Thus some have thought that the main interest of the great epic poets consists in the expression which they give to the spirit of their times. Hence many have compared Homer and Virgil as expressive of the Greek and Roman peoples in the times in which they lived. Also Milton and Dante, as expressive of the mind and circumstances of England and Italy in the 17th and 14th centuries. Thus the satirists especially of Rome, France and England might be compared and found to express the circumstances

and characters of the people to whom they appealed.

The *Clouds* of Aristophanes supplies an instructive comparison between the scientific and educational thought of Greece in the 5th century B. C. and those of the present day. Calderon's *Life is a Dream* has been read as supplying a ground of comparison between Spanish and Indian mysticism. Many poems have been written, by different poets, on the *Nightingale*, the *Skylark*, the *Cuckoo*—it might be of interest to compare these lyrics, and distinguish the different characteristics of the authors, manifested in them.

These methods of study are all of much interest by themselves, and cast much light on authors and their works. But they are not criticism in the proper sense of the word. They do not help us to understand what is good or not good in the works treated, and the reason why,—which is the proper work of criticism.

Meaning and Use of Criticism in the Stricter Sense of the Word.

To criticise a composition is to distinguish and examine its parts and qualities in their relations to one another, and to the purpose for which it is intended. To criticise for poetry is to distinguish and examine the different constituents of a composition in their relations to

one another with a view to determine whether it comes under the head of poetry (*i.e.*, fulfils the purpose which poetry is meant to fulfil), and what kind of poetry it is, and what degree of excellence belongs to it as poetry of its kind. And the use of criticism is to help the public to understand, appreciate and profit by what is good in poetry. (Such a definition, of course, takes for granted the fundamental condition of sound criticism, *viz.*, that the critic himself has a full understanding of the nature and purpose of poetry in all its forms, and is not swayed by any fads or prejudices.)

A vast amount of literature claiming to serve this purpose has appeared in modern times, but has not always justified its claim, and its shortcomings have sometimes brought critics and criticism into disrepute. Critics have been said to be would-be authors who have failed in their profession, and sought to cover their failure by assuming, as critics, an attitude of superiority over their more successful competitors, and disparaging their works. And their methods of criticism have often been objectionable—the spirit of party, and of political and social prejudice, have often turned their efforts in the wrong direction ; and dogmatic assertions have too often taken the place of reasoned exposition. They have often been unable to appreciate anything new, and have thereby

discouraged originality, and affected unfavourably the "intellectual atmosphere" of a period. Hence, they have been accused of being the "parasites" of literature.

But this criticism of critics (though not without justification in some cases) may be carried too far. Without having the original creative power or the gift of poetic expression, the critic may have sufficient insight into the meaning and purpose of poetry, and into the truths of nature and life which supply the materials of poetry. And he may be more able than others to estimate the use which the poet has made of his materials, and may be able to guide the judgment of readers as to what is really good, and enable them to see for themselves the reason why, and judge for themselves intelligently.

Matthew Arnold has done more than any one in recent times to vindicate the honour and usefulness of criticism and its claim to be recognised as a legitimate branch of literature. Indeed he goes so far as to say that the great need of English literature in his time was "a critical effort" such as had been, he thought, "the main effort for many years, of continental literature." He seems to think that the accumulated mass of literature in all departments has become so great that life is too short for ordinary people to grapple with it, and that competent persons are needed

to select and point out to the public what is best. These gifted persons are the critics. "Criticism in the widest sense of the word is a disinterested effort (*i.e.*, free from political, social and personal prejudices) to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." By so doing it will turn thought in the right direction, and create a current of new and fresh ideas. These new ideas propagated by criticism (among other good effects) will supply new materials for good poetry. "A poet ought to know life and the world before dealing with them in poetry." Such criticism of the work of the past, he believes, will supply the knowledge needed for the future.

But Arnold, while dilating fully on the work and dignity of criticism, does not give us much light on the ultimate question: how the critic is to accomplish this great work, *i.e.*, how he is himself to know what is best in literature, and how he is to make it clear to other people. For this work, he must (as Coleridge had pointed out half a century before) have himself attained a thorough understanding of the nature and purpose of poetry (which many early critics wanted), and must have derived therefrom the principles needed to guide the mind in its judgment of what is good in poetry.

Poetical criticism may therefore be described simply as "a disinterested effort" to discover

and point out what is best in poetry. Or it may be further explained, as an effort to ascertain whether any composition is fit or not fit to fulfil, in a lower or higher degree, the purpose for which poetry is intended. But it is not enough to say to people dogmatically that this or that is good or not good. Criticism, to be genuine, must make it clear on what reasons its judgments are based, and thereby help the reader to understand and judge and appreciate for himself, what is good in poetry.

The critic, therefore, must be expected to have an adequate conception of the nature and purpose of poetry, and be able to judge from the nature of poetry itself, what is good or not good in particular poems. It is of interest therefore to consider the different ways in which critics have actually judged poetry in the past.

Different ways in which poetry has been criticised.

(*a*) *The dogmatic way.*—One way has been to judge according to certain rules already accepted and regarded as indispensable to good poetry. Such rules have usually had reference to the structure of poems, or ways in which the different parts have been connected together so as to constitute a single whole. Thus Aristotle judging from what had been most successful in Greek drama, drew up certain rules which he considered necessary to give the different parts

of a drama or of an epic, the unity of a single whole. Such rules were long accepted as standards of criticism, and formed the main distinguishing characteristics of the classical school of poetry. Thus Addison in judging Milton's *Paradise Lost* thought that, as a critic, he was bound to consider its conformity to the principles of Aristotle, and even in judging the old English ballad of *Chevy Chase*, he thought it best to compare it with the manner in which combats were described in Greek and Roman poets; and close to the middle of last century the tragic drama of France and Italy was still regulated by the rules (or rather suggestions) of Aristotle. But this led to an excessive imitation of models and to a mechanical repetition of the same forms, and restricted freedom and excluded originality from poetry; and thus gave rise to the romantic revolt.

(*b*) Another way of judging poetry is what may be called *the Impressionist way* or judgment by *Taste*. A reader may, without any thinking of his own, feel the impression, agreeable or disagreeable, which a poem makes on his mind—the colours, sensations, feelings and ideas which it raises and makes to pass before his inward eye,—and may enjoy the pleasure which they give, or *feel* the dislike which they may occasion; but may make no attempt to determine the reason why the one poem gives

him pleasure and the other does not. If the poem gives him pleasuraole feelings and thereby excites his interest, he is satisfied and pronounces the poem good; if it gives no pleasure he pronounces it bad or worthless, and sets it aside, and thinks no more about it.

Thus one may luxuriate *passively* in the colour, variety, wonder and mystery, of the *Fairy Queen* and *Earthly Paradise*, or in the humour and truth to life of the *Canterbury Tales*, or turn away with indifference from Gower or Lydgate or from *Sordello* or *Prince Hohenstiel Schwangau* or *Proverbial Philosophy*, without thinking of any reason for his pleasure or his dislike—it is enough that one gives him pleasure and the other does not.

This is no doubt the commonest way of judging poetry. We may know nothing about the rules of Aristotle or any other critic, and may never have thought on the nature of poetry or what poetry should be, but we feel that it gives us pleasure and are content to enjoy what it gives without asking any question about it.

It is here that personal *Taste* comes in. When a poem gives us a feeling of pleasure or dislike, and we have no other reason for its so doing, we say that such is our taste. The taste of a particular fruit affects us pleasurably and that of another does not, we do not know the

reason why. A physiologist could tell us the reason; the fruit contains certain chemical substances which affect our gustatory papilli in certain ways; but we care nothing for that. So in poetry. From this it would follow that, as we cannot find fault with a person for liking or disliking a particular fruit, so we cannot find fault with one for liking or disliking a particular poem. There is no use of arguing about tastes. One is just as good as another (*de gustibus non est disputandum*).

Is there then no standard of taste in poetry, any more than in physical tastes? Indeed we hear very often of *good* taste and *bad* taste, in relation to poetry and the other arts. This would imply that some uniformity is attainable even in taste for poetry.

Yet poetical taste is not determined by physical organs, as taste for foods and drinks are. It consists in a mental disposition which may be partly innate, but depends largely on experiences, associations and habits of early life. Its origin has been studied most fully by Alison in his *Essay on the Nature and Principles of Taste*. Many psychologists have held with him, that the partial uniformity of taste which can be accounted for by association with agreeable and disagreeable things in early experiences, is the only possible standard of æsthetic judgment. But such a standard can be only impressionist at best,

and no general or permanent uniformity of judgment can be attained by it. Further, we want a standard which will help us to see reasons for our judgments,—over and above the impressions which things make on us passively.

Yet there is such a thing as good taste in poetry though it may not be absolutely uniform, and good work has been done by critics essentially impressionist. Of these none has given better guidance to readers of poetry than Hazlitt in his *Lectures on the Poets*. He gives us no theory of what poetry should be, nor explanation why one thing is good and another is not, but his natural taste is almost unerring —especially in dealing with the descriptive parts of poetry and with metaphors and similes—the side of poetry which he seems to appreciate most (like Jeffrey and other followers of Alison).

(*c*) Another way of judging poetry (though closely allied to the preceding, being essentially impressionist with an element of dogmatism) is judging by *examples* or specimens. The critic may set before us certain examples, and may tell us that whatever resembles one example or set of examples is good poetry, and that what resembles the other set is not good, without giving any other reason, and we are expected to judge poetry in general by our recollection of these specimens.

This method is followed largely by Matthew Arnold. Though Arnold writes so much about criticism, his own definitions of what is good do not go much beyond such general recommendations as the "application of ideas to life," "sweetness and light," moderation and truthfulness in statement, and especially "high seriousness" and "the grand style," giving us specimens of these qualities, especially from Wordsworth and Keats. If ever he commits himself to definitions, as when he tells us that "poetry is the criticism of life" or "the application of ideas to life," they are too general to help us much.

For the main function of the critic is to show the reader how to lay hold of the fundamental idea of a poem, and how to make the poem develop itself in his own mind as in the mind of the poet. It is only then, that he fully comprehends and profits by it. Comparison with specimens will give but little help.

An example of criticising by specimens is afforded by the ancient critic Longinus (prime minister to Zehobia, queen of Palmyra). He wrote a treatise *on the Sublime* (or the *elevated*) in literature. By this he did not mean dealing with lofty subjects, but power, force, intensity of expression—the power of expressing the deepest thought and strongest passion in few words so as to give the reader an overpowering

conception of the thing. He proceeds by quoting examples of this power from Greek poets, and often, to show his meaning, re-states the sense of the passage in language of his own nearly as impressive as the original.

Of English poetry it may be doubted whether any one (apart from Shakespeare) has attained the intensity of expression admired by Longinus more successfully than Robert Burns in many of his shorter poems. But Burns in his strongest poems is always more or less humorous, satirical, or sarcastic; which excludes them altogether from the sublime of Longinus (who, like other classics, would insist on the "high seriousness" of all high art). Browning also exhibits the power in many poems and passages, but obscurity and prolixity often impairs the effect of his best work. This force of expression seems to have been much aimed at by some recent poets such as Meredith and F. Thompson, but their straining after force by exaggerations and by extravagant metaphor, is too obvious to be really impressive.

Another way of criticising from example consists in citing the ways in which different poets have treated the same or similar subjects, and considering the points of difference, to determine which is best. A good example of this method is to be found in the now perhaps forgotten letters on translating Homer by Prof. John Wilson (Christopher North). Wilson quotes translations of the same passages by the four

translators known in his time (Chapman, Pope, Cowper and Sotheby) and compares them clause by clause, and in so doing gives reasons for his preferences, and thereby improves on the merely impressionist method. (*Cf.* Arnold on *Translating Homer.*)

These ways of judging poetry are all, no doubt, instructive when tastefully applied (as by Hazlitt), but they come short of the main purpose and justification of criticism. The true function of the critic is not to say to people dogmatically that this is good or that is bad ; nor merely to tell them that this gives himself pleasure, and that does not (his judgment depending on the vagaries of taste). No one of these methods helps much towards a real appreciation and enjoyment of poetry. His real function is to help people to see and feel for themselves what is good and not good, and thereby to appreciate and profit by it themselves. Before the critic can do this, he has to form for himself an adequate conception of what poetry is or should be—in other words, to see what the meaning and purpose of poetry is—so as to be able to derive from that insight the principles needed for an intelligent judgment of what is good and not good in poetry—the view of Coleridge.

Modern Criticism: First Question: What is Poetry ?

The need for a systematic study of the art of criticism was made apparent especially in the first quarter of the 19th century. Certain poets had begun to write in a vein of thought and a

style of diction different from that which had prevailed in the previous century. They were very severely handled by the critics of that time. The criticism was mainly of the dogmatic kind. The rules and forms essential to good poetry, and the subjects and lines of thought alone admissible had been already determined for all time, the critics said ; and any departure from them was to be reprobated as foolish presumption and subversive heresy. Coleridge especially protested against this kind of criticism. He called for a psychological inquiry into the nature of poetry, and for principles deduced therefrom which would guide readers to a just appreciation of what is good in poetry.

He himself began such an inquiry, but left it incomplete. Wordsworth and Shelley both contributed much in prefaces and notes. Afterwards Carlyle and Ruskin supplemented their work with many suggestions in the same line of thought, as did Pater and Bradley and others subsequently. The views arrived at by these enquirers seem to have been generally accepted. The main purpose of this article is to simplify, and condense their conclusions—following especially Coleridge and Wordsworth as the clearest (if not also the deepest) thinkers on the subject.

It is agreed, then, that the first condition of sound criticism is that the critic himself have

a sound conception of the nature and purpose of poetry.

Must we, then, have a definition of poetry? That has always been felt to be impossible; poetry is so like the wind which bloweth where it listeth; it cannot be confined within the limits of a definition. Nevertheless, though not a definition, some comprehensive conception must be possible. All are now agreed that it is in the first place an *expression* of something, and that its excellence depends on that something—the way in which that something is expressed. The question therefore is: what is that something which it is the purpose of poetry to express and the expression of which is poetry?

Here we may begin with the description of Wordsworth—"Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of *powerful* feelings recollected in tranquillity." This makes feeling to be the dynamic, or moving force of poetry—the force which makes the poet write. But feeling by itself is nothing—to be something real, it must be the feeling of some experience whether present, remembered, or anticipated. That is, feeling rises out of knowledge, and cannot be preserved nor conveyed to other minds without conveying the knowledge—the ideas of actual or possible truths—out of which it rises.

Thus poetry is founded on knowledge and truth actual or possible,—things seen and known

in the poet's mind. The poet sees deeper and is more sensitive or excitable than other men, and things seen and recollected excite stronger feelings in his mind, *e.g.*, anger, resentment, pity, admiration, gratitude, wonder, hope, etc.; and often this feeling is so strong that it will not allow the poet to rest until he has given it full expression in his own mind, and has communicated it to other minds, and impressed on them the same thought and feeling.

Therefore poetry is not "all in the air" or only idle play, out of all connection with the realities of life. It is not based on antiquated mythological superstitions, conceptions of things which must pass away taking poetry along with them, as civilisation advances (as Peacock argued, and even Macaulay showed himself at one time inclined to admit). Such subjects may serve for fancy or the poetry of mental play. Great poetry deals with the deepest truths of life and nature. So long as men think and feel about their own position and destiny, the deepest and truest of their thoughts and feelings will be poetry. Poetry therefore is eternal as the heart of man. It has the same foundation as science, *viz.*, knowledge and truth, and the same purpose as the literature of science, *viz.*, the communication of truth and the feelings which rise naturally out of truth known. "It is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge,

it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science, it is the first and the last of all knowledge." So far as poetry is concerned, therefore the maxim of the poet holds good: "Beauty is Truth; Truth, Beauty"—poetry is the revelation of one aspect of truth and it is in that aspect that beauty lies.

But if poetry and science have the same purpose, *viz.*, the communication of truth, in what do they differ?

They differ in the kind of truth which they seek to know, express and convey; they differ in the way in which they obtain the knowledge which they convey; and they differ especially in the ways in which they express and convey the knowledge and truth with which they are concerned, to other minds.

(*a*) As to the kind of knowledge which they seek to express and convey. Science takes all truth for its province, and seeks and values truth for its own sake, whether it can be seen to have any connection with human interests or not. Poetry limits itself to the sphere of human interests,—whatever affects directly or indirectly the destiny of humankind, is its province. What has no human interest has no interest for poetry.

To be sure, much poetry concerns itself with external nature. But this is because humanity in this life is wholly immersed in and dependent

on nature, and everything in nature has interest as affecting, reflecting, and illustrating in some way, the life of man. When descriptive poetry ceases to have any significance in relation to life, it comes to be more like natural history than poetry. Description of nature becomes poetical when, instead of being a mere enumeration of things, it makes its details suggestive of truths, feelings and thoughts bearing on the life and destiny of men. The Roman Lucretius wrote a lengthy metrical work *On the Nature of Things*. It might have been expected that this would be merely a dry summary of the natural science of his time. But he contrived to make almost every line suggestive of some feeling or thought bearing on the life and destiny of man as product of nature and thereby made his work to be a great poem. Much of the descriptive poetry of the 18th century however was description and nothing more, which made Lessing write his *Laocoon* to depreciate descriptive poetry as mere enumeration of particulars without putting any meaning into them. The new poetry of the nineteenth century, made much use of natural description, but differed essentially in this, that it made everything in nature to be a lower form of reflection or illustration of something in life, and thereby gave meaning to everything, making its descriptions fill the mind with thought and

feeling. Hence a poet of the new school could say :

> " To me the meanest flower that blows,
> Can give thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Lessing's criticism had been blind to this philosophy of life in nature—the supernatural in the natural.

(*b*) They differ still more in respect of their methods of obtaining the knowledge which they express. Science obtains its knowledge by observation and experiment, and inference from the premises thereby obtained. Its method therefore is inference, and its *organon* is logic. The poet, on the contrary, does not experiment nor draw inferences ; he *sees* and *feels* the truth which he expresses, and he expresses it in such a way as to make his reader also see and feel it. He is a *seer*, and his method is insight, intuition, vision. His gift is "the vision and the faculty divine" which consists in seeing deeper into the truths of nature and life than other men. Indeed Coleridge and Shelley would have us believe that in genius (poetic and other) the creative power itself of nature, enters into the finite mind and reproduces there, in terms of thought, its own work in the world of nature—making the life of the macrocosmos live over again the microcosmos of finite mind—and that genius consists in glimpses of the passing vision as

Faust glimpsed the secrets of life in his vision of the creative spirit, and as Plotinus, Boehme and others, saw them open up before them in occasional flashes of insight. This may be mysticism, but nevertheless it is true that poetry cannot be produced artificially by any dexterous manipulation of materials accumulated from without, but must come (as Shelley maintained) by an intuition or vision which opens up spontaneously from within the mind itself.

(*c*) The difference between poetry and science, and prose in general when not itself poetical, becomes most prominent, however, when the ways are considered in which they give expression to truth and convey it to other minds. Science expresses truth as far as possible in abstract ideas and general propositions, and the greater the degree of generality it attains, the more scientific it becomes, and truth is of the most scientific kind when it can be expressed in mathematical formulæ, which are the highest degree of abstraction possible.

Poetry tends in the opposite direction, and seeks to express truth in the most concrete and pictorial form possible—in the form of images or pictures in which the meaning can be *seen* by the mind's eye, as we "read the mind's construction in the face"—and therefore intuitively and without the reasoning and inference peculiar

to science. Its peculiar *organon*, therefore is Imagination, or the power of embodying truth in concrete imagery—in descriptions, narratives, metaphors, and other symbolical pictures—as opposed to the generalisations and abstractions in which scientific truth is expressed. Poetical expression is opposed on one side to that kind of composition which is a mere enumeration of particulars (as prose generally is) and on the other side, to that kind in which particulars are lost altogether in generalities and abstractions as science generally is.

Thus prose proceeds mainly by enumerations, of particulars, adding detail to detail—abbreviating sometimes by summing up many details into class ideas. The poet rises above mere enumeration of details. He sees deep into things, and sees what is fundamental and genetic in them and expresses it in such a way as to make the needful details rise of themselves in idea without verbal expression, and fill the mind with spontaneous thought and feeling. Thus the effect of a poem depends not so much on what it says as on what it suggests. The highest poetry can make many things and events rise before the mind's eye by means of a single image or group of images. Thus the often quoted lines of Marlowe: "Is this the face that launched a thousand ships, and burnt the topless towers of Ilium"—present the whole ten years' struggle, to the mind's eye, and rouse a deeper feeling than any mere enumeration of events. Shakespeare's "The dark backward and abysm of time" expresses the infinite depth of past time in a few words more effectively than many lines could have done.

Hence it may be said that in the highest poetry only a small part of the pictures presented to the reader's mind are painted by the poet himself. What is most mysterious in the poetic gift—"the faculty divine"—is the power which the greatest poets have, of making the images which they themselves paint, raise in other minds vistas of mental vision and trains of thought far beyond what the poet has himself put into words. Shakespeare possesses this power of *suggestion* beyond all other poets (to such a degree indeed as to make him out and away the greatest of all poets). Wordsworth also has the power in a remarkable degree. But he does not command the same profusion of ideas, so that it is only now and then that he rises to the highest level of poetic achievement.

Thus Shakespeare's tersely expressed lines—

> "Lamentings heard i' the air, strange screams of death,
> And prophesying with accents terrible,
> Of dire combustion and confused events
> New hatch'd to the woeful time; the obscure bird
> Clamour'd the life-long night; some say the earth
> was feverish and did shake,"

fill the mind with feelings of mystery and horror far beyond what is directly contained in the words used. And Wordsworth abounds in lines

which fill the mind with far-reaching thought such as these—

"He springs the hushed volcano's mine,
He puts the earthquake on its dark design—
The fierce tornado sleeps within his courts."

and frequently, lines which suggest trains of pleasing fancies such as—

See the children sport upon the shore
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

(*d*) But what, in short, is poetry in the *last analysis*? In the above analysis that which is most characteristic and distinctive of poetry is still wanting, *viz.*, the fundamental dynamic which underlines all the feelings which move the poet to think and write. The forward impulse which pervades nature and life, and produces a universal straining towards progress and evolution, enters into the reason of man and manifests itself in an aspiration to rise from lower to higher. This aspiration again manifests itself in the desire to see deeper into the meanings of things and events and to seek and find realities beyond the screen of sense-experience within which science is confined—to see deeper truths in nature and life which will imply deeper realities beyond (hitherto) the reach of science, and to find satisfaction in the contemplation of such transcendent truths. This impulse makes Poetry. The aspiring mind may indeed

turn back upon its aspirations and think at times that their high visions of poetry are but vain illusions. But the aspiration will not be suppressed. The rational soul will still feel itself "cribbed and confined at home" and will "roam and expatiate in a world to come." The spirit of progress and evolution becomes spiritualised in the spirit of poetry. The impulse of rational thought to rise into poetry is universal and eternal in the human mind (as Wordsworth and Shelley argue.) And Shelley's contention that, in history, intense periods of poetic thought are synchronous with moral and intellectual intensity in the life of a people may not be without some justification. Hence

The use of poetry.—We should now be able to deal with the question put to Shelley and to so many others; what is the use or purpose of poetry? A common answer is that the purpose of oetry is merely to produce pleasure. But this is a very superficial answer. There is indeed a kind of poetry that aims at a certain kind of pleasure—poetry which aims mainly at affording relaxation to a weary mind by making to rise and pass before it, a train of images which are refreshing by their novelty, variety and beauty, and that without any straining of the mind itself—which is the poetry of Fancy or mental play. It is for a kind of pleasure mainly that one reads *Endymion*, or the *Earthly Paradise* ("the idle singer of an empty day") and

perhaps even the *Faery Queene*. But one soon tires of poetry which has no substance in it, *i.e.*, embodies and reveals no truth. Hence from poetry of Fancy, Coleridge distinguishes poetry of Imagination, which consists in expressing thought and feeling in concrete imagery. This is the highest kind of poetry. Its purpose is not to produce a pleasurable relaxation but to express, and to impress on other minds, the thought of the poet. Some feeling has taken a strong hold on the poet's mind. He cannot rest until he has given it full expansion and expression. When he has succeeded, he has a feeling of satisfaction, but this feeling is much more than pleasure in the ordinary sense. On the other side, the reader has the satisfaction of being enlightened and made to see and feel what he never saw and felt before, —glancing for a moment into a new world and breathing in "an ampler ether, a diviner air" and living a higher life. But this also is much more than pleasure in any ordinary sense. Thus the pleasure which the highest poetry gives, is that of rising for a moment into a more spiritual form of being above the limitations of the physical world and into a sphere of thought—

> "In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all the intelligible world."

is lightened for a moment.

This is a kind of utility very different from that of supplying the needs of the physical senses, but nevertheless real of its kind.*

Modern Criticism: Second Question: How Poetry should be criticised.

With an adequate conception before his mind of the nature and purpose of poetry the critic can see how poems are composed, and what his own function as critic is. In the first place he can see that a poem rises and forms itself in the poet's mind somewhat as follows (to recapitulate) :—

A poem has its beginning in some fact or truth which the poet sees or recalls, and which lays hold of his mind in idea, appropriating to itself all his thinking power, and exciting some strong emotion—be it anger, indignation, pity, gratitude, wonder, fear, hope, regret, sorrow, or the like. The poet is one who both feels and

* Sir John Davies in his poem on the Soul has stated the nature of poetry thus;

> "Thus does she (the soul) when from individual states
> She doth abstract the universal kinds,
> Which then, re-clothed in divers names and fates,
> *Steal access through the senses to our minds.*"

This means that the soul discerns deep truths of nature and life first, in the abstract form, and then embodies them in concrete imagery, in which they can be seen directly by the eye of the mind.

thinks more deeply than other men; and the fundamental idea is at first not adequate to give full embodiment to his feeling; and this keeps him thinking until the idea develops itself into a system of connected ideas, each with its own shade of feeling: and these reinforce one another, and grow together into one whole of thought and feeling to which the original thought finds full expression. But thought and feeling by themselves are but "airy nothing"; the thinking power, as it evolves its ideas, puts them into words; and words give connection and permanence to ideas and feelings; and thus an organic whole of thought, feeling and language gradually takes form in the poet's mind, of which the fundamental truth (idea) is the soul which evolves and holds them all together in one living whole. And the poet cannot rest until he has impressed this whole of cognition, feeling and conviction on other minds. This is the purpose of the poem.

Thus a true poem is not made but grows from a germ within the mind, as a plant in the soil, and by a life-power which is a spiritualisation of the life-giving power of nature. It is not art, but inspiration; it cannot be produced by any labour of the will. A person may have read many books, and remember their contents accurately and may bring together materials from the fields of memory and join them

together dexterously, but a poem thus made artificially will be like the rose made of paper and paste—it will have no life in it.

Now with an adequate conception of the meaning and purpose of poetry in general before his mind, the critic will be able to judge as to what is good or not good in particular poems. And from the above conception of a poem, one can see what main questions will have to be considered in criticising a poem.

Thus he may apply the distinction between content and form (though it is not to be pressed too far, as in the highest poetry they become inseparable).

I. *As for content.*—According to Goethe and Carlyle "the first and foremost duty of the critic is to make clear to himself what the poet's aim really and truly was; how the task he had to do stood before the poet's eyes; and how far, with such materials, he has fulfilled it." When criticism first asked: What thought has the poet intended to express, and how far has he succeeded in expressing it, the way was opened to the only reasonable and useful form of criticism.

The purpose of the poet may be a small and simple one fulfilled in a few lines, or may be a comprehensive and complex one involving many branches. Thus the mind of Virgil was filled with a conviction of the function and duty

entrusted by heaven to Rome, as saviour and arbiter of nations; Dante had a deep belief in the justice of Providence as manifested, if not in this, then at least in a future life; Milton was convinced that it was possible "to justify the ways of God to man." These subjects were of vast extent. But Virgil, Dante and Milton felt that they could impress these truths on other minds, in narratives which would be at least symbolically true. Wordsworth's vision of the *Daffodils* was but a trivial experience in itself, but it filled his mind with a feeling of the correspondence between human life and the life of nature. The words of the child in *We are seven* confirmed his belief that the soul in early life preserves an intuition of its own inherent vitality, and therefore of the unreality of death, an idea worked out more fully afterwards in his *Ode on Childhood*: these convictions impelled him to give them formal expression and communicate them to other minds.

In judging the purpose of a poem the critic will have to bear in mind the essential distinction between the poetry of Fancy and that of Imagination, and will not denounce a work like *Endymion* for wanting logical construction and deep lessons of worldly wisdom, nor a classical tragedy like *Samson Agonistes* for wanting flowers of fancy and rhetoric. He will not criticise *Prometheus* or the *Witch of Atlas* or

the *Dunciad* on the same principles as the *Essay on Man* or *In Memoriam*.

II. *As to form.*—Having considered the poet's purpose, and method—serious, playful or satirical—dramatic, epic or lyric—fancy or imagination—the critic will have to consider the means which the poet has used to accomplish his purpose. It would be useless to attempt to enumerate all the points in a poet's treatment of his subject which may need the consideration of the critic, but the most prominent may be noticed here; the following are some of the questions which will occur to him most frequently.

1. He will consider whether the poem is a work of art or mainly of inspiration (commonly called genius). The place of art in poetry has been a subject of much discussion. Much depends on the meaning assigned to the word art. Real art means something more than merely collecting materials from different quarters, and pieceing them together into an intellectual mosaic after a pattern,—though this method has been followed sometimes in poetry. It may mean evolving patiently from within the mind itself many possible ways of giving expression to the fundamental idea, and distinguishing the best. But in this sense it may not differ essentially from inspiration,—unless it be that it takes longer time than when

the right form of expression flashes on the mind immediately. Even if Tennyson needed more time and reflection than Shelley to find the right words, it does not follow that his work was artificial merely. His ideas came mostly from within his own mind, and he selected the best and gave them order, and in this there was native genius as well as art. It has been said that genius is but an infinite capacity of taking pains.

The place of art in poetry formed a main subject of dispute between the classical and romantic schools of poetry. The classics attached the utmost importance to art, as necessary to give symmetry of parts, relevance and moderation ("sweet reasonableness") in language, to the exclusion of unnecessary verbiage and ornament—but with some consequent tendency to imitation and monotony. The romantics accused them of being artificial and secondhand in everything, and appealed to spontaneity and inspiration, but often fell into prolixity, verbiage and rhetoric.

2. He will consider how far it is original and how far imitated. The question of imitation has also been debated. Can a poet ever be justified in repeating ideas and images which have been used by others before him? It may be said that if he make a new or a better use of them than his predecessor he has a right to them. A French poet, when accused of plagiarism, said that he had a right to take back his own property wherever he found it,—meaning that he needed

these things more, and could make a better use of them, than his predecessor.

3. With regard to the parts into which the poet has expanded and developed his fundamental idea and purpose. Do all subordinate parts rise naturally out of the subject and do they all harmonize with each other in such a way as to form, with the fundamental idea, one organic whole, in which the original purpose is fully realised. This is the problem of *unity* to which Aristotle and the classical school attached special importance but which is a fundamental condition of all art.

Thus in the case of a drama, the critic will consider whether the successive scenes rise naturally out of the subject and circumstances, and are so correlated together as to form one whole of action in which the fundamental intention is worked out; and whether the actions of the different persons rise naturally out of the circumstances and characters ascribed to them. He will object to all scenes and persons, which, even though they should be good in themselves, contribute little or nothing to the plan of the whole. He will consider also the use made by the poet, of epic elements in the form of description and narrative, of lyric elements of song and chorus, and of rhetorical declamation. He will consider also the use made in tragedy, of comical characters and dialogues (excluded by the classical school).

4. The critic will consider also the language in which the poet has sought to express his thought, and its fitness for the poet's purpose.

He may apply the old distinction between a Saxon style and a Latinised style.

Is it mainly of native English origin, or largely classical (Latin or French)? Is it terse and condensed, or is it prolix, giving more words than needed for the purpose? If the poet speaks in character—monologue or dialogue—the critic will expect that the language is in keeping with the character and circumstances of the speaker. If the poet speak in his own person, what kind of language should he use? Should it be the language natural to himself in speech and in prose or should it be a more or less artificial dialect, invented for the purpose of poetry only. Wordsworth and others hold that the language of poetry should be (with due refinement) essentially the same as that which could be used in prose (on the principle that the deepest thought is best felt when expressed in the simplest language, and that the difference between poetry and prose lies not in the kind of language used but in the kind of thought and feeling expressed). Others have assumed that there should be a special kind of language, invented and reserved for the use of poets—consisting largely of words and phrases which could not be used in prose—an artificial "poetic diction." Different kinds of poetic diction have been used at different times,—*e.g.*, that of the 18th century against which the *Lyrical*

Ballads was a reaction. The use of such artificial diction and its encouragement by critics, has sometimes led, as Wordsworth complained, to the illusion that poetry differs from prose mainly or wholly in the words and phrases used, and not in thought and feeling.

Hence the critic may have to consider also the relation of the poet's style to the various fashions of phraseology and style (poetic diction) which have prevailed at various periods, *e.g.*, the euphuistic and 'metaphysical' styles with their 'conceits'; the epigrammatic and antithetical style; the periphrastic style; the "homely" and "familiar" style; the extravagantly metaphorical style; straightforwardness and affectation of style.

5. The poem may be largely descriptive or narrative. Description will always be important in poetry, because it is the nature of poetry to express thought as far as possible in concrete pictures (imagination). The critic therefore will consider the poet's power of description. Is his description simply an enumeration of details, like a catalogue of things for show (Lessing's charge against the descriptive poetry of 18th century)? Or, are the several details so related as to form together one pictorial whole? Or, has the poet the power of painting (by suggestion) a whole picture with only a few descriptive touches? Are his descriptions presented wholly for their own sake, or are they such as to express or suggest some meaning

(thought or feeling) bearing on human life (as in the descriptive work of most 19th century poets)? And are they all subservient to the fundamental purpose of the poem as a whole? Much the same tests will be applied to narrative and lyric poetry.

6. As poetry consists so largely in power of expressing thought in a pictorial form by power of imagination (image-making), similes and metaphors will enter largely into poetry. Hence the critic will have to consider the poet's similes and metaphors, each of which should be a mental picture expressing thought. Thus—

(*i*) As to his similes: the poet may *simply* state the fact that his subject is like such and such another thing. Or the other thing to which he compares his subject, may be described so fully as to be a complete picture by itself, containing many more details than those which enter into the actual likeness—the simile being thus expanded into a little poem, capable of being considered by itself. This was the practice of Homer, especially in the *Iliad*, and the example was followed by Virgil and Milton and by many others (*e.g.*, the simile of the bees repeated from Homer in different ways by both Shakespeare and Milton).

(*ii*) The critic will consider also the poet's metaphors (in which the similitude is absorbed into the text), which are to many poets the

favourite form of expression. Thus the later plays of Shakespeare and the poems of Shelley are tissues of metaphors.[1] (Indeed some critics, such as Jeffrey and Hazlitt, seem to have thought of poetry as consisting mainly of metaphors.)

The danger in the use of metaphor will lie in the intermixture of different comparisons (mixed metaphor) and confusion of the subject illustrated with the thing used to illustrate it (*cf.* the poetry of Meredith). The critic will have to consider whether the metaphors are original, and whether they rise naturally out of the subject and really express thought and feeling and are not mere 'purple patches' stuck in for decoration, and whether they serve to deepen the fundamental thought and feeling of the whole.

7. The critic will have to consider also the use made of Wit and Humour, Satire and Burlesque, in the poem, and their bearing on its main purpose—humorous speeches and dialogues, satirical descriptions as often in Dryden, epigrams, antitheses, contrasts and sarcasms as in Pope, mock-heroic and burlesque as in *Hudibras* and

[1] The following example of this may be cited from Shelley:—

"O thou,
Who chariotest to their cold wintry bed
The winged seeds where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within a grave, until
Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow
Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill."

the *Dunciad*. He may notice two kinds of satire: that which depends for its effect on "pointed" statement and epigram as that of Pope, and that which shows an intermixture of mockery with fancy and imagination, fact and pathos, raising satire into poetry, as that of Burns and Byron.

8. The critic will consider also the harmony of the language and of the versification. "He cannot be a genuine poet who has no music in his soul." His harmony will consist in the rhythm or flow of the words, and in the comparative proportions of the clauses, lines, and verses. This is a subject which requires separate analysis and illustration. (Part VII.)

9. The critic will sometimes have to apply the distinction between poetry and rhetoric. Poetry includes everything essential to the concrete expression of thought and feeling. Rhetoric will include all adjuncts which may be ornamental and pleasing in themselves, but add little or nothing to the meaning—the thought and feeling—of the poem. It will include "flowery language," metaphor beyond what is needed, descriptive details which add nothing to the main thought. It belongs to the sphere of Fancy or mental play, as distinguished from that of Imagination or pictorial expression of thought. It is pardonable when it gives genuine pictures of things (even when not necessary).

It is objectionable when it produces illusion merely, *i.e.*, gives an appearance of thought and substance to what is only verbiage. (Thus, to speak of prose, the speeches of Cicero have sometimes been compared unfavourably with those of Demosthenes, as often degenerating into useless rhetoric, as also those of Burke.) Such rhetoric was condemned altogether by Aristotle and classical critics, but regarded more tolerantly by romanticists, *e.g.*, De Quincey. The danger is that it hides under a mass of words, the main purpose of a poem, or even substitutes altogether wordy declamation for poetry.

Finally, the critic will consider above all the effect of the poem as a whole. Is the thought of which it is the expression something new? Does it give even a little glimpse into reality, revealing something which no one else has seen before, or thinking what no one else has thought before? If so, it is a good poem? Does it do anything to enlighten, encourage, stimulate, elevate mankind, casting new light on any of the mysteries of life? If so, it is a great poem. This was the point of criticism most insisted on by Thomas Carlyle.

The critic.—It follows from the above sketch of the function of criticism that, though the critic has no right to set himself up as a dictator in the realm of poetry (as Jeffrey was accused of doing—"self-constituted judge of poesy") his function is

an important one; and that the endowment required to make a really great critic is the gift of a high order. He cannot rank with the original creator of the work criticised, but to be a really good critic he has to be a *re*-creator. He has to begin where the poet began, reproducing the original fact of experience or memory which excited the creative impulse in the poet's mind, and he has to feel that force working in his own mind as it did in the poet's mind, and evolving into the same system of contributory ideas and feelings, and arriving at that whole of thought and language which is the poem. He will then be able to judge the poet's work from the inside, having done it over again himself. Hence the critic of poetry has to be himself something of a poet (though only in a secondary sense).

But many critics have not confined themselves to criticism in the strict sense, but have expanded their subject adding extensive commentary and reflexions of their own, so that criticism, though not great literature by itself has supplied occasion for much literature of high worth, *e.g.*, Carlyle, Macaulay, Lowell, Swinburne, Hutton, Dowden, Hazlitt, Morley, and others.

Nevertheless the main purpose of the critic, as such, is to enable other people to understand and appreciate literature. This means that he must help the reader also, to follow the growth

of the poem in his own mind as the critic himself does. In so doing the reader will feel something of the same pleasure of creation which the poet felt, and will be able to enjoy whatever insight into the heart of things the poet has been able to obtain and express. "The vision splendid" will pass before his mind's eye, less brightly than before the poet's own, but still intelligible and enjoyable.